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34 STAR TREK BRIDGE COMMANDER Take command of your own starship and dish out the orders to the lackeys in this epic-looking game from the makers of the *X-Wing* series.

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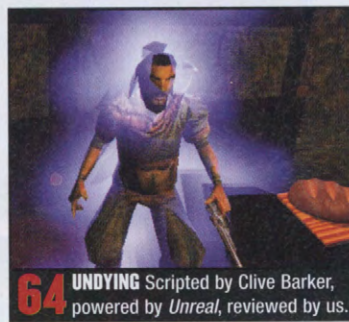
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EXCLUSIVE DEMOS

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

FALL OUT TACTICS: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

PLUS

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THREE KINGDOMS: FATE OF THE DRAGON

AND MANY MORE

BULLETIN

Quite literally the most definitive games news section in the universe

REGULARS

Lots of stuff about stuff, or something like that

TROUBLESHOOTER

The most extensive and comprehensive tips section in town

END ZONE

Just when you thought the mag had ended… blimey, a whole lot more!

The ultimate gaming mouse has finally hit the UK, page112.

...and a tooth for a tooth.

Might and Magic...now online, now on LAN

'The Legend continues...fifteen years in the making, the latest chapter has arrived. Travel to distant worlds of epic, fantasy-filled dungeons and bloodstained battlefields.

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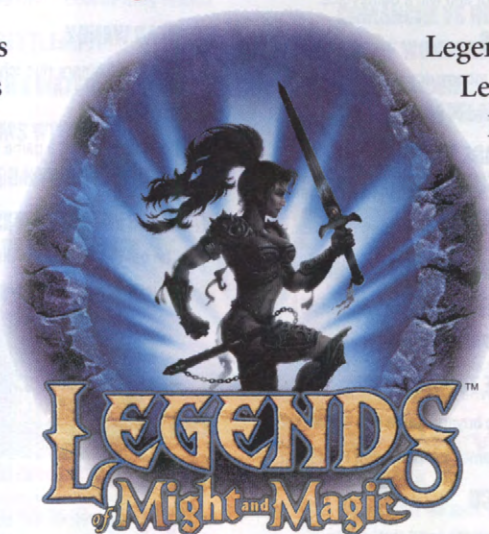
Legends in the Might and Magic Universe. Legends uses the state-of-the-art LithTech™ 2.0 engine to provide an adrenalin pumping first-person multiplayer gaming experience. Each player controls a single character in a team based adventure taking place via the Internet or LAN.'

The Legend continues.
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APOCALYPSE NOW?

We've been plugging the phenomenon of online gaming for years now and our dedicated section has been uncovering the mods and bringing you the latest news, previews and reviews since issue 92. From the letters I've received recently it's obvious that more and more of you are turning to your phone lines for your gaming fix, but there's still a large group that want nothing to do with it, seeing it as the death of the single-player game. If you belong to that group then you'd probably get on well with Steve Hill, who jokingly likens the Internet to the pogo stick. "It's just a fad" he's been known to mutter in between mouthfuls of beer.

Now it's obvious to everyone except the most ardent *Championship Manager* fan that the Internet is here to stay, and online gaming is going to mutate into the next big thing, but it's equally obvious that Net dominance is still a way off. For a start, fast and affordable connections are only just starting to creep into this country, and until everyone can afford to have constant, fast, open access to the Internet things aren't going to move very far. Check out the first part of our massive 12-page feature on page 86 for the low-down on 56K modems, ISDN and ADSL. Which one should you be shelling out for?

More importantly, businesses on the Internet and the online gaming community in general are finding the going a bit rough at the moment. Last month we received the sad news that Barrysworld was being forced to close, leaving hundreds of thousands of gamers homeless. You can find Phil Wand presiding over the last rites on page 76. This shock news, along with the protracted troubles of online giant Gameplay and all the dotcom disasters of the previous year, proves that you can throw millions of pounds at the Internet, but until you find a workable business model you're not going to get anywhere except back to square one, and nursing some pretty sizeable wounds. Unfortunately, the upshot of this means that you might have to – brace yourselves – start paying to play online. Free ISPs, free servers and free lunches on the Net seem to have had their day, and online communities are going to have to come up with a different business plan. It's time for plan B to kick into gear.

This isn't necessarily bad news, in fact, I see it as the next stage of growth. And don't worry. It's not all doom and gloom this month. If you hadn't already noticed, we're kicking off our brand new online magazine this month – you can find it nestling between the reviews and the Supertest. We're proud to be the first UK games magazine to back online gaming in this way and each month Richie Shoemaker is going to bring you the best the Internet can muster, along with the latest mods on our two cover discs. Go on, jump in, you won't look back.

> **"Obviously the Internet is here to stay, and online gaming is going to mutate into the next big thing, but Net dominance is still a way off"**

Dave Woods
Editor

There are over 19 variants on the standard Nazi soldier. But they're all bastards.

SAVE YOUR PRIVATES IN MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER 2015
PUBLISHER EA
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE October
WEBSITE www.2015.com

IN SUMMARY

It's a World War II first-person shooter that brings with it a wealth of experience from the PlayStation versions. You play an American Lieutenant sent on missions throughout Europe, bombing Nazi facilities and making full use of stealth. The game features highly detailed graphics powered by the *Quake III* engine, which is also being used for the James Bond game that's in the works, *The World Is Not Enough*.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Allied Assault brings you the glory of epic-scale battles in amazingly recreated scenarios, combined with stealth missions and clever gameplay. In many ways, this is the thinking man's *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*.

It may have hopped from the PlayStation, but this is more Steven Spielberg than console

⭐ DISHONOURED Mark Hill

A beautiful Mediterranean villa. You could spend hours just looking at the trees. But they would probably lock you away.

The game includes all the realistic weaponry you would expect from a World War II title.

To the trained *Counter-Strike* eye, there are dozens of hiding places from which to attack here.

Apparently the developers went through the same boot camp the stars of *Saving Private Ryan* did. We're betting it will show.

An empty street? Watch out for snipers in those windows.

Can you believe just how detailed those faces look? And what about the background?

World War II has inspired many great games, all the way from *Wolfenstein* to *Commandos* and *Hidden & Dangerous*, but not many have started their lives on a console. Originally masterminded by DreamWorks (Spielberg's company), *Medal Of Honor* set out to translate the vision of *Saving Private Ryan* in all its epic and gory glory into a videogame. Judging by the screenshots, that vision is only set to become a reality with the PC version, *Allied Assault*.

Before you start waving your fists in angry accusation at the thought of another second-rate console conversion that only makes use of a tiny proportion of your machine's capacity, let me tell you that developer 2015 is building the game from scratch rather than attempting a port. Furthermore, they're using a tweaked version of the *Quake III* engine and have somehow managed to create incredible outdoor areas and crammed loads of detail into every element of the graphics. Sound good? Wait till you hear about the gameplay.

Closer in style to *H&D* than *Wolfenstein* – or indeed any *Quake*-powered game to date – *Medal Of Honor* places a lot of emphasis on stealth and sabotage rather than mindless shooting action. In fact, if you try to go for the gung-ho approach you'll be shot to pieces faster than you can say *Project IGI*. As Lt Mike Powell you'll be charged with

completing missions will get you all sorts of commendations, from the Purple Heart through to the titular Medal of Honor.

The typical scenarios will encompass the *Saving Private Ryan*-style ode to mutilation that is the landing at Omaha beach in Normandy and small-scale battles in bombed villages full of collapsed buildings and crawling snipers. Apparently the Omaha beach mission was shown to Steven

66 Steven Spielberg was blown away by how intense the bullet-thick air and high body count felt. And that was only an early version of the game 99

all sorts of missions – rescuing POWs, assassinating high-ranking Nazi officers, blowing up German factories – starting out in North Africa and working your way through Europe. Not surprisingly for a game with the word 'medal' in the title, successfully

Spielberg who was blown away by how intense the bullet-thick air and high body count felt. And that was only an early version of the level.

But the game offers much more than big showdowns. There's room for subtlety too. Stealth extends to

being able to ride on vehicles – tanks, trucks, motorcycles – even if Nazis are driving them. We're also hoping to see one of the features from the console version, which allowed you to steal enemy uniforms and move freely among the enemy, or get shot if you gave yourself away by failing to salute a superior. The multiplayer aspect is still being tweaked but expect there to be both deathmatch and co-operative modes. After all, those *Private Ryan* scenarios would make fantastic *Counter-Strike* maps. **PCZ**

I don't mind getting mortally wounded, just stop with the Monty Python jokes!

A MAN'S HOME IS HIS CASTLE
STRONGHOLD

IN SUMMARY

Firefly Studios is still a relatively new outfit, although *Stronghold*'s development team has worked on such classics as *Caesar* and *Lords Of The Realm*. The game is not about open air, smell-the-blood type battles like *Age Of Empires II* or *Shogun* are, it's more about creating an impregnable fortress.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Picks up medieval castle building where Interplay left off with *Castles II* in 1994. The game focuses on the medieval aspect of castle construction, maintenance and defence.

There's ham, jam and spam all over the place as we prepare to get building medieval-style

★ **CHIEF ARCHITECT** Rhianna Pratchett

Mock tudor will never go out of style.

Molten stuff. Always handy to have around in a siege.

The neatest castle in all of medieval-land.

Home security used to be so much simpler.

Persistent beggars aren't they?

If the last castle you built was on Brighton beach, the last time you got fortified was from a bowl of Ready Brek and the last time you wanted to pour hot oil over someone was while watching *The Weakest Link*, then brace yourselves for Firefly's *Stronghold*, because your life is about to get a whole lot more interesting.

Whether you're thwarting the local lord or reclaiming land, there's quite a bit of planning required before you can get to the actual building of your castle. It's as much an exercise in managing the micro-economy of your castle as it is about having a damn good set-to. Firstly you'll need to survey your kingdom for the best possible land for gathering the limestone and wood needed to build your castle, and the flat ground required for farming. Only then can you choose a suitably dominant position for your keep and be on the way to constructing your own personal Camelot.

Every castle needs staff and you'll need to lure local villagers into your domain with promises of hard labour, or maybe just a quick go in the iron maiden. Once you've got a decent number of peasants under your thumb and a few essential buildings like a smithy and an inn, your economy will run itself with relatively minimal intervention, leaving you free to think up new ways to maim, murder and deep-fry your enemies.

As far as fortification goes, there are 80 different building types to choose from, including battlements, portcullises, parapets and lots of other stuff you only ever hear about in GCSE history classes. As with the *Caesar* games, much of the object of *Stronghold* revolves around your reputation as a leader, and your minions will be very vocal in showing

their appreciation or dissatisfaction. You'll need to find a happy medium between keeping your workers happy by throwing a few free beer days and keeping them in silent terror by making sure you've got a few heads on spikes prominently displayed around the place.

Sooner or later your castle will be besieged by enemies, and you'd better be ready for them because they'll generally outnumber you. You'll need to deal with siege weapons like catapults, burrowing equipment and that most deadly of weapons, the ladder. However, the prize for the most amusing weapon has to go to the Pythonesque 'disease-ridden donkey cart'. It will be interesting to see if

⊕ Gonna get medieval on yo' ass.

this style of defence-focused gameplay catches on, as it has seldom been designed as the main tactic of an RTS or sim, being more the kind of thing you'd expect to see in an online multiplayer game. *Stronghold* will appeal to the campers out there, the wallers, you know who you are. The ones who like to sneakily hide

"You build a castle, you defend it, that's pretty much the main concept behind *Stronghold*"

themselves away instead of going out to play with the big boys and especially those who had to invent young cousins just so they could buy medieval Lego.

You build a castle, you defend it, that's pretty much the main concept behind *Stronghold*, but with Firefly's pedigree, its attention to detail and the promise of absorbing medieval AI, it could be your most impressive erection all year. PCZ
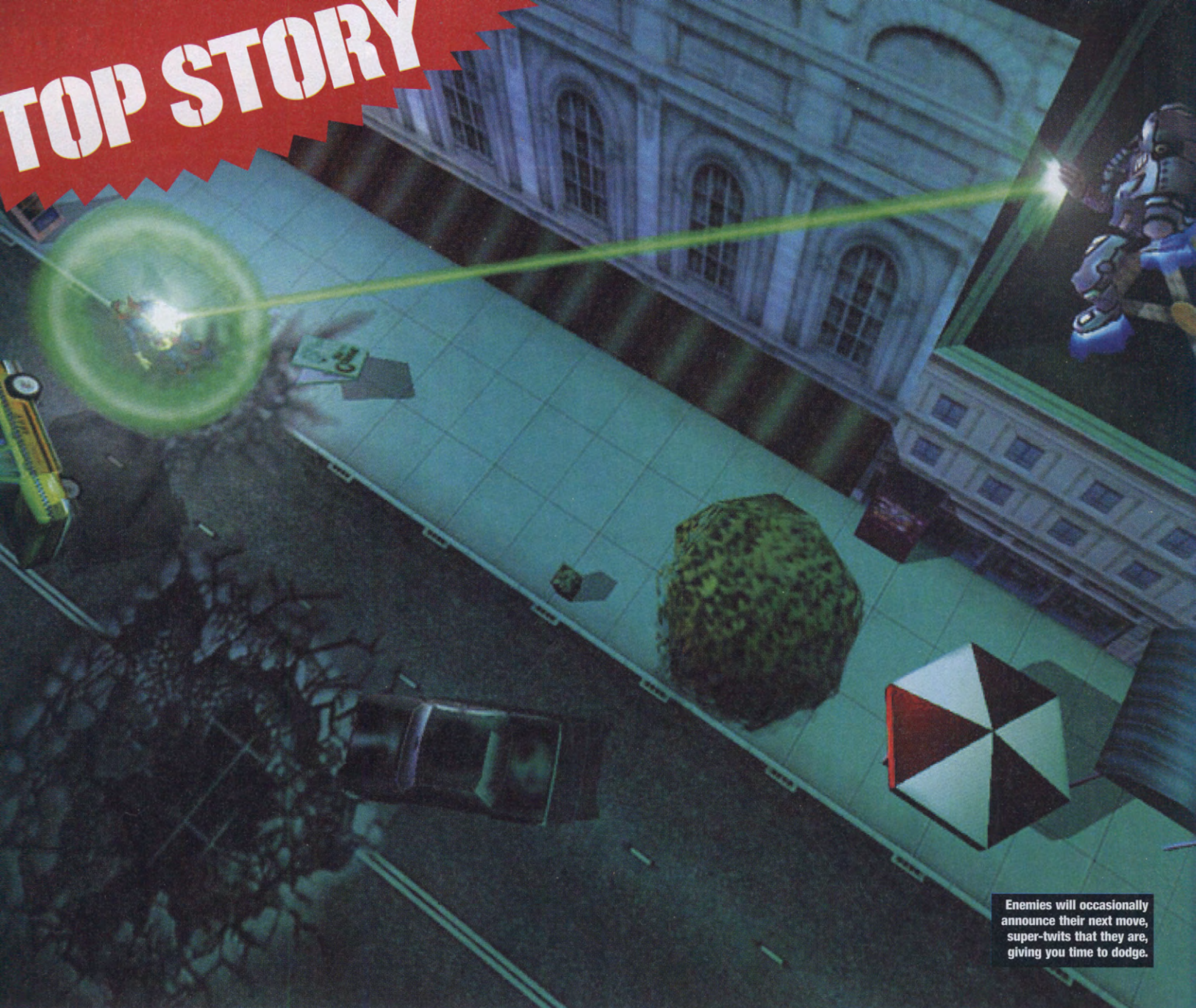
Enemies will occasionally announce their next move, super-twits that they are, giving you time to dodge.

SEARCH FOR THE HERO INSIDE YOURSELF

FREEDOM FORCE

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Irrational Games
PUBLISHER Crave
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE November
WEBSITE www.myfreedomforce.com

IN SUMMARY

Mixing *X-COM* with superheroes, *Freedom Force* is the first game for as long as we care to remember featuring grown men in tight leotards flying through New York and wrecking buildings in the name of justice and capitalism. Tactical combat doesn't get in the way of fun and you can even recreate your favourite comic book characters.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

When the people behind a new game have worked on *Thief* and *System Shock 2* you sit up and take notice. They are self-confessed comic book fanatics, so even if the characters are all made up, the spirit will be true to Stan Lee's 1960s creations.

Is the PC finally going to get a decent superhero game?
⭐ **SUPERVILLAIN** Mark Hill
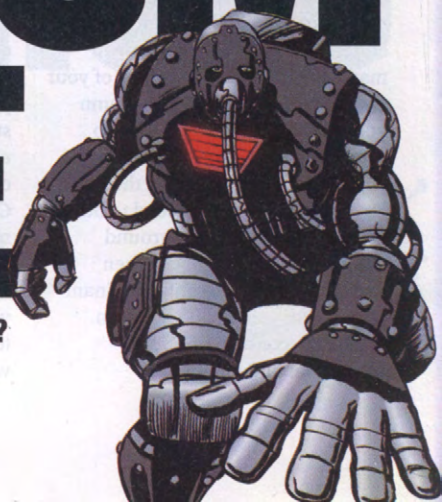
You'll be able to insult villains, but no news yet as to whether you'll be able to spit at them.

Wow, a big ball of light. Impressive.

Wham! Bang! Kapow! Crash! Shit.

One mission involves saving the city from an invasion of giant ants.

That's not that impressive, lady.

After eating some giant mushrooms, Bryan thought setting his own hand on fire would be a good idea.

W hile superheroes have enjoyed a resurgence in big budget films like the *Batman* series and *X-Men*, and have been continuously misused in shallow console beat 'em ups, they have been strangely absent from our PC monitors. Who better to finally break the super-silence than the people behind one of the best games of the past decade, *System Shock 2*?

"Harking back to a simpler age, both the design and story immediately bring to mind early Marvel comics, with bright colours and ludicrous lycra costumes"

Free from the constraints – both creative and financial – that a big-name licence would bring, Irrational Games has developed its own brand of '60s-inspired superheroes. Harking back to a simpler, more innocent age, both the design and story immediately

bring to mind early Marvel comics, with bright colours and ludicrous lycra costumes. Definitely more Adam West than Tim Burton. Among the characters are Minute Man – clearly the game's version of the fascist Captain America – and Manbot – who both looks and sounds like a version of Iron Man. The characters will have superpowers including the ability to fly, jump great distances and crush buildings with one finger.

The game is powered by the same engine driving the Gollops' *Dreamland Chronicles*. It also shares that title's *X-COM* influence. Most of the action is viewed from a pseudo-3D isometric camera and the combat uses the same kind of 'active' turn-based system found in the *Final Fantasy* series: you have to wait for

a character's turn before you can tell him what to do, but you have to be quick about it, as time doesn't stop for you to fiddle about.

As you can see from the screenshots, *Freedom Force* has also been injected with a healthy dose of humour, in sharp contrast with the deadly seriousness of *SS2*. Picking up school buses and throwing them at enemies, then snapping off a lamp post to beat them into the ground with is just a sample of the sorts of things you'll be able to do during battle.

The game takes place in New York where, for some strange reason, people are turning into superheroes and supervillains. As part of the group recently transformed, your Freedom Force must investigate what's causing this epidemic.

As you progress through the missions you get to control more heroes, while the RPG side of the
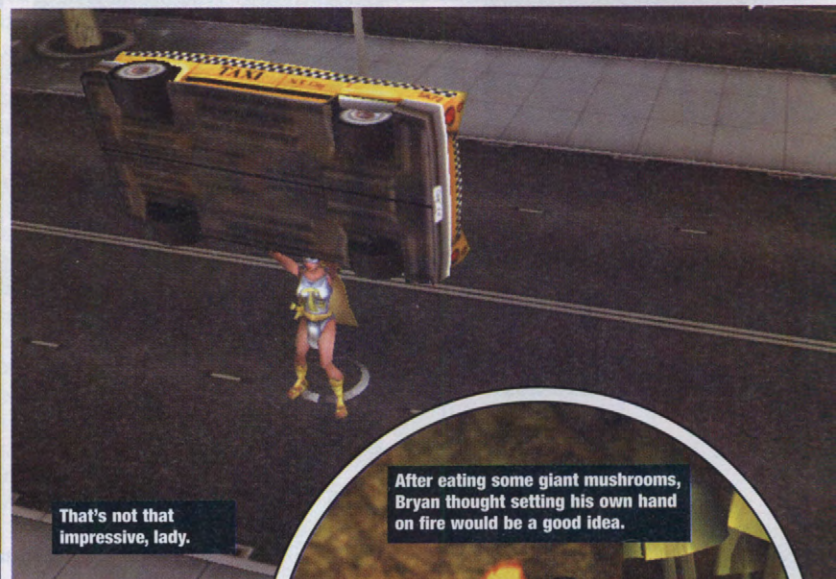
game means that you can improve the ones you start out with, although they will only occasionally gain new powers.

If you've been driven into a dark hole of despair after reading that the game doesn't feature any of your favourite heroes, don't worry, you can customise characters and even create your own. This means that multiplayer games will undoubtedly be populated with every Marvel and DC Comics hero imaginable. We look forward to trying our hand at Bananaman. PCZ

LICENCE PLEASE

⭐ **NEWS EDITOR** Mark Hill

Big names sell. Not a startling piece of news perhaps, but one that has been amply illustrated this month with announcements and/or rumours of publishers buying well-known licences to sell more games. Traditionally, having an established brand (whether it's a film, a TV series or whatever) is a licence to put out a substandard product that will still raise an eyebrow of interest. Of particular interest is Shiny's confirmation that they're working on a *Matrix* game. Apparently, the company isn't just basing a title on the licence, it's actually working closely with the Wachowski's as they film the second and third parts of the trilogy consecutively. In other licensing news, *Peanuts*, the Charles Schultz comic strip, is being made into a game, as is the film/TV show *La Femme Nikita*, about a top secret female assassin.

There's nothing really wrong with this. There are very few true visionaries in the industry, capable of coming up with great ideas and helping to design them too, so why not take something that's already out there? A mere three months after our Waiting To Happen article featured a strong claim about Rebellion making a Judge Dredd game, an announcement has been made, and we couldn't be more pleased. And the sales for *Undying*, the excellent FPS that has made some fresh white hairs on my head (reviewed on page 64) will certainly be helped by having Clive Barker's name stamped on it.

Another closely related phenomenon is the number of games being made into films. The *Resident Evil* movie is finally being made (although, alas, not by George Romero), Wes Craven is about to start filming *American McGee's Alice*, *Tomb Raider* is almost ready to hit the cinema screens and there are still rumours of Liz Hurley starring in *No One Lives Forever*. On top of that, *Nocturne* is being made into a TV series, all excellent news for gamers.
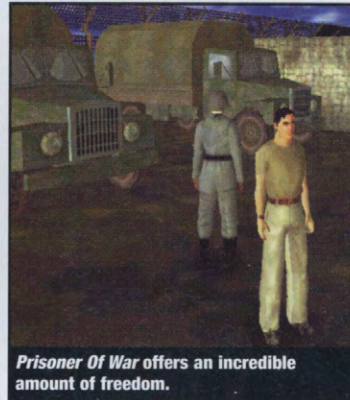
Prisoner Of War offers an incredible amount of freedom.

"The plan is simple: dig a hole and stick the earth down your trousers."
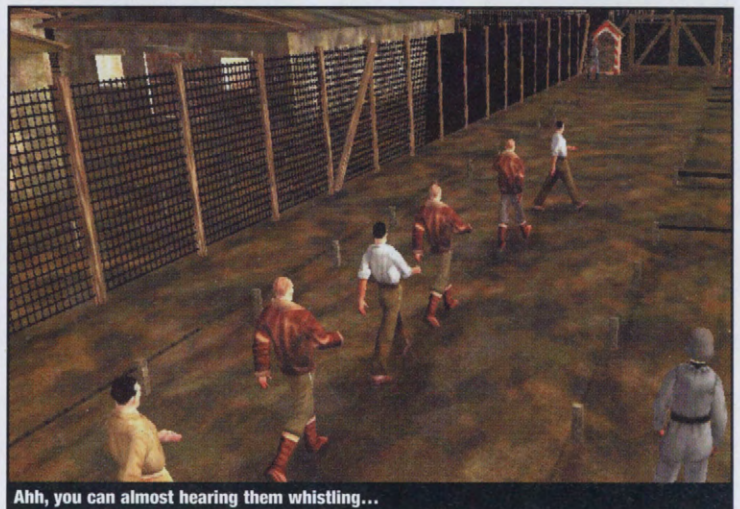
Ahh, you can almost hearing them whistling...

JAILBREAK

⭐ Wide Games • ETA end of the year • www.widegames.com

The Great Escape is about to be remade. Sort of

Anyone who's played *The Great Escape* on the Spectrum can't help but have wonderful memories of that title, or wonder if they'll ever get to play it with today's technology. While the game isn't being remade, Wide Games' latest effort sounds close enough for us. Going under the working title of *Prisoner Of War*, the game is being developed for the PlayStation 2 as well as the PC. Injecting a dose of *Metal Gear Solid* stealth, the object is to escape from German prisoner of war camps during World War II. You control four allied officers (an American, a Frenchman, Dutchman and a Brit) each one an

expert in different fields of jailbreaking. The environment is completely interactive and, judging from the screenshots, it will feature the daily routine of prison life, just like *The Great Escape* did. There are four camps in the game – Salonika, Stalag Luft I, Stalag Luft III and Colditz Castle – each one progressively harder than the last. We've been waiting for a game like this all our lives, so you can be sure we'll keep you posted as soon as we get hold of any more information. Don't be surprised to see publishr Codemasters delaying the release until early next year, though. This is one they'll want to get just right.

IT'S JUDGEMENT DAY

⭐ Rebellion • ETA next year • www.rebellion.co.uk

James Nasmyth brings you a first look at the *Judge Dredd* game, and a new crop of *2000AD* titles

Oxford-based Rebellion has had a string of hits, including the classic *Aliens Vs Predator*, but it came as a bit of a surprise when the shining light of Brit-soft suddenly upped and acquired "the galaxy's greatest comic", cult British sci-fi classic *2000AD* late last year.

"We liked the comic so much, we bought the company," Rebellion's Jason Kingsley joked at the time, but while a puzzled industry initially scratched its head, it proved a shrewd move for Rebellion, who had suddenly landed the intellectual property rights to more than 20 years worth of classic sci-fi characters, plots and storylines – exactly the kind of raw material on which you could base a crop of hugely successful games.

Quite a coup indeed. And now that daring purchase has borne fruit in the shape of the first batch of *2000AD* inspired titles. Naturally leading the way is the character who's become the symbol of the comic and has been the star of every single *2000AD* Prog (apart famously from the first one), Mega City One's harshest law enforcement officer Judge Joseph Dredd. Although the *Dredd* game is still very much in the early stages of development, Rebellion has decided that a first-person shooter will be its weapon of choice and the game will be based in Mega City One, the sprawling metropolis which occupies an entire coastline of the futuristic US.

Indeed, after the superb visuals of *Aliens Vs Predator*, you'd expect something pretty special on the graphical front, and for the *Judge Dredd* game Rebellion has developed a spanking new engine, specifically designed to mimic the dark look and brooding feel of a graphic novel. In action, its Graphic Novel Renderer is extremely impressive, with incredible detail and amazing lighting effects that perfectly capture the vertiginous landscape of Mega City One. The Halls of Justice and several immense city blocks have already been mapped in immaculate detail, and although no character models are yet in place, one intriguing possibility being considered is the option to choose Dredd's look from one of the many art styles that have appeared in the comic over the years.

While no storyline has been fixed, Rebellion is keen to get some of the original creators on the team, people who are obviously well in tune with *Judge Dredd*'s futuristic world. Although the Judge himself is as stern and humourless as possible, the strip has always had a droll, subversive undercurrent, which we definitely want to see emerge in the game. Our fave Psi-babe Judge Cassandra Anderson will almost certainly feature, and we'd also expect to see Dredd equipped with authentic equipment like the Lawmaster bike and Lawgiver handgun, firing everything from heat-seekers to ricochet ammunition.

Rebellion also revealed that this may just be the first of many *Judge Dredd* games, and other possibilities currently under discussion include a *Dredd* tactical strategy-style game and possibly even a game based in Judge School. But Dredd isn't the only *2000AD* character in development. Warped Celtic warrior King Slaine is also slated to feature in a real-time strategy outing based on Simon Bisley's superb Kingdom Of The Young. There's also talk of a hush-hush role-playing project on the cards, but Rebellion is currently undecided whether it will be a *2000AD* character or not. However, it admits to being a huge fan of genetically-modified infantryman Rogue Trooper as well as Strontium Dog – mutant bounty hunter Johnny Alpha – so it wouldn't come as a surprise to find these two characters venturing into the gaming world in the near future.

Mega City One: home to billions and every one a potential criminal.

Formations play an important part in battles.

You could always become a farmer... wait a minute, isn't that *Ultima Online*?
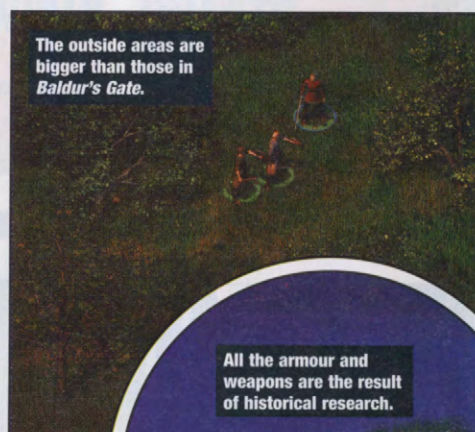
The outside areas are bigger than those in *Baldur's Gate*.

All the armour and weapons are the result of historical research.

ASGARD AS IT GETS

⭐ Snowball Interactive • ETA late spring • www.snowball.ru/cgi/php/fatherdale/

Russian codeshop mounts a strategic challenge for the RPG crown

Baldur's Gate II has sealed Black Isle's domination of the traditional RPG genre, but Russian developer Snowball Interactive is shaping up as a considerable threat. Set in medieval Europe around 1072 AD, *Fatherdale: The Guardians Of Asgard* gives role-playing games a new grounding in history. Your role is that of an immortal hero – echoes of *Planescape: Torment* in that respect – who is reborn time and again, retaining all knowledge from previous lives. In your current life, as a warlord in the valley of Fatherdale, you're called upon to help the Norse gods in an epic war.

With a ready-made mythology to build upon, Snowball has been able to dispense with the usual RPG marauders of orcs, elves and wizards. The emphasis on historical accuracy should ensure non-hardcore gamers will be able to get into the experience without feeling too ridiculous.

Although you create your own main character, all other party members join you on your travels, each one with a very defined personality and individual set of skills. All your actions affect your reputation, and everything you do will piss off a fair share of people as well as get you in the good books of others.

The biggest difference between Fatherdale and other RPGs is that the combat brings it a step closer to a sophisticated real-time strategy. You can form military groups, which are affected by the leader's abilities as well as factors such as fear, fatigue, morale and stamina, and put them in six different battle formations. Another big surprise is the absence of a normal magic system, although this being based on Norse myths there'll be plenty of strange things going on.

Although Snowball has put a lot of work into developing the story and the characters, they're promising a lot of freedom in the way you play the game, and there are often various ways of attaining the same goal. If it plays as well as it sounds, they shouldn't have any problem finding a publisher.

STONED DRUIDS

⭐ CDV • ETA TBA • www.mysteryofthedruids.com

Only Germans could make an adventure game about druids and Stonehenge and keep a straight face. Although, having named the character in *Mystery Of The Druids* Brent Halligan, maybe CDV is a fan of *Spinal Tap* after all. Your job as Scotland Yard detective Halligan is to investigate a murder and the druidic order suspected of committing it. In the process you'll have to stop a rite from taking place and travel back in time to find a mysterious staff. The game looks surprisingly good and should appeal to *Gabriel Knight* fans everywhere. We're hoping there'll be a group of dwarves dancing around an 18in model of Stonehenge involved at some stage.
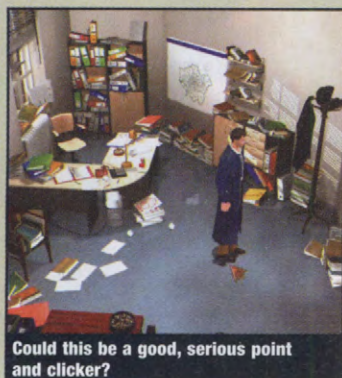
Could this be a good, serious point and clicker?

Well, there's the bobby, but what about the red phone box?

Nothing like an authentic cowboy party.

Sims singing Kumbaya? Noooooooo!

SIMS PARTY HARD

⭐ Maxis • ETA summer • www.thesims.com

Another pack for *The Sims*. Ker-ching!

It may be ready to make the move online (see page 78), but *The Sims* still has plenty of mileage for the offline community. The release of *Livin' It Up* last year meant that the Maxis cash cow has taken permanent residence in the charts. At one point, the original release, the add-on and the pack that includes both of them were all up there. It's no surprise to see EA announcing yet another expansion, *The Sims: House Party*, with more dresses and house accessories for your virtual dolls. There are further tweaks in the gameplay, so that you'll be able to make your sims progress up the career ladder with greater ease and keep large numbers of friends without having to constantly phone them. Plus you can now organise large parties in your house, with dozens of guests and caterers and DJs keeping things running smoothly. There are three themes of party, which seems a bit restrictive: jungle, country & western (ouch) and underground rave. There are around 100 new objects to go along with the themes, although there are no new careers to explore. Given the huge fanbase, you can almost see the dollar signs in EA's eyes.

↩ This looks like a good party.

TECH HEAD

Details of the next Microsoft software line-up, plus some micro machines

⭐ **WORDS** Carlos Ruiz

MICROSOFT XP-RIENCE

Upcoming versions of Windows and Office will carry the XP tag

This year, Microsoft (www.microsoft.com) plans to enhance the PC experience further, with new Windows and Office packages designed to embrace the latest in networking and web technologies. They have already been christened 'XP', and are major steps towards achieving Microsoft's .NET vision of allowing customers to leave behind conventional, 'disconnected' applications and devices, and therefore being able to enjoy complete, connected experiences.

"These versions of Windows and Office will give people the most powerful end-to-end computing experiences ever available," says Bill Gates. "The coming generation of Windows XP and Office XP will enable customers to communicate and collaborate more effectively, be more creative and productive, and have more fun with technology."

Windows XP, formerly codenamed 'Whistler', will bring massive communication potential to the masses. Thanks to digital and cable Internet connections, information can be easily accessed from a host computer via remote devices at all times, while resources can be shared around all PCs in the home. This would cut costs in terms of only having to buy one printer and Net connection, for example.

In a departure from the tradition of having separate versions of Windows for business and home use, we can finally expect a combination of the NT/2000 and 95/98/ME cores, resulting in a single product designed to combine stability and networking options with compatibility and multimedia features. Office XP, meanwhile, works in much the same way as its operating system counterpart, taking advantage of the new capabilities to offer true sharing of documents, with the streamlining of functions designed to help users work faster. Both products are currently in the beta testing stages, and Office XP may see the light of day as early as June. However, expect Windows XP to be released sometime during the second half of this year.

Microsoft .net

Start saving for another Windows update. Now.

SIZE MATTERS

New generations of mini-robots show huge potential

Somewhere in America, researchers at Sandia National Laboratories have been toiling through their lunch breaks in an effort to develop the smallest autonomous, untethered robot in the world – so tiny, in fact, that you could crush it with the top of your thumb. Weighing no more than an ounce and powered by three watch batteries, the

Size really does count in the robot world.

little automaton uses two drive motors to achieve locomotion, with a top speed of 30 metres per hour.

At the heart of its skeletal membrane lies an 8K ROM processor, which may eventually be used to control a miniature camera, microphone or sensor. With the correct equipment, it might even be able to relay information to a human operator, or have several robots co-ordinating with each other, like insects.

Any robot that moves without human interaction uses complex AI to follow a correct path in relation to certain objects – and despite the plucky android's size, it can already navigate through a field of coins.

Previous small robots consisted of packaged electronic parts that were bulky and took up valuable space. By eliminating the packaging and using electronic components in die form, the size of the robot's electronics was considerably reduced.

To further reduce the scale and capabilities of such robots requires a breakthrough in power storage – or rather, the ability to contain larger amounts of power in a significantly smaller volume of capacity. Soon enough, though, they'll be able to see us – but we won't be able to see them.

"This could be the robot of the future," says project researcher Ed Heller. "It may eventually be capable of performing difficult tasks that are done with larger robots today, such as detecting land mines or biological weapons." What a comforting thought.
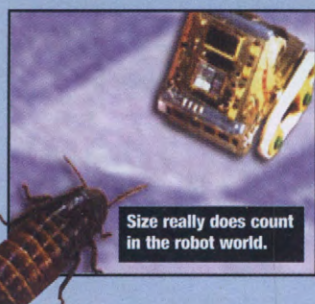
NEFARIOUS DEAD

● Black Element ● ETA autumn ● www.blackelement.com

Evil takes up residence in Prague

George Romero's influence pops up everywhere in computer games these days, although no one has quite created the ultimate zombie experience. Czech developer Black Element is having a go with *Nefandus*, an action/adventure in the mould of *Resident Evil* and *Alone In The Dark*. The game uses a powerful new engine capable of huge amounts of detail, with realistic lighting, fog and shadow effects thrown in for good measure. It also has a dynamic camera that will hopefully solve the problems of the *Nocturne* engine, especially when the screen fills up with enemies.

The story is intriguing enough, and has you playing the role of a priest sent to a small village by the Church to investigate a possible miracle, only to find a pandemonium of evil when he gets there.

Black Element cites *Vampire* as an inspiration for the design.

Don't expect too many shotguns or rocket launchers.

There are plenty of monsters other than zombies.

IT'S A PRIVILEGE

Every supermarket and big High Street chain has one and now the privilege card is coming to the games industry, courtesy of Gameplay and Take 2 Interactive. Designed by White Box – a division of The Playing Fields – the card offers Gameplay customers exclusive information, discounts, promotions and competitions on Take 2's latest and forthcoming titles such as *Oni, Tropico* and *Mafia*. The card is an interactive CD, shaped in the form of a credit card. A White Box spokesman says: "we are pleased to be at the forefront of new media development and will be hoping other publishers follow suit." As if we didn't have enough crap in our wallets.

Gamers have rights and privileges too, you know.

MINDROVER RETURNS

You might remember a game called *Mindrover: The Europa Project* that we reviewed back in *ZONE* #96. Originally, the game was available only from the US, but now a British company – who saw our review, bought the game, and liked it – has set up a website that you can buy the game from. So, UK gamers can now sample the *Robot Wars*-like delights of *Mindrover* without import hassles. Check it out at www.mindrover.co.uk.

HOW DO YOU SURVIVE IN A POST NUCLEAR WORLD

DO YOU JUST HIDE IN THE TOILET OR DO YOU GET TACTICAL

Be prepared. Get tactical.

PC CD

MICRO **FORTÉ**

Fallout Tactics

www.interplay.com/fallout

HOSTILE WATERS

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ANTAEUS
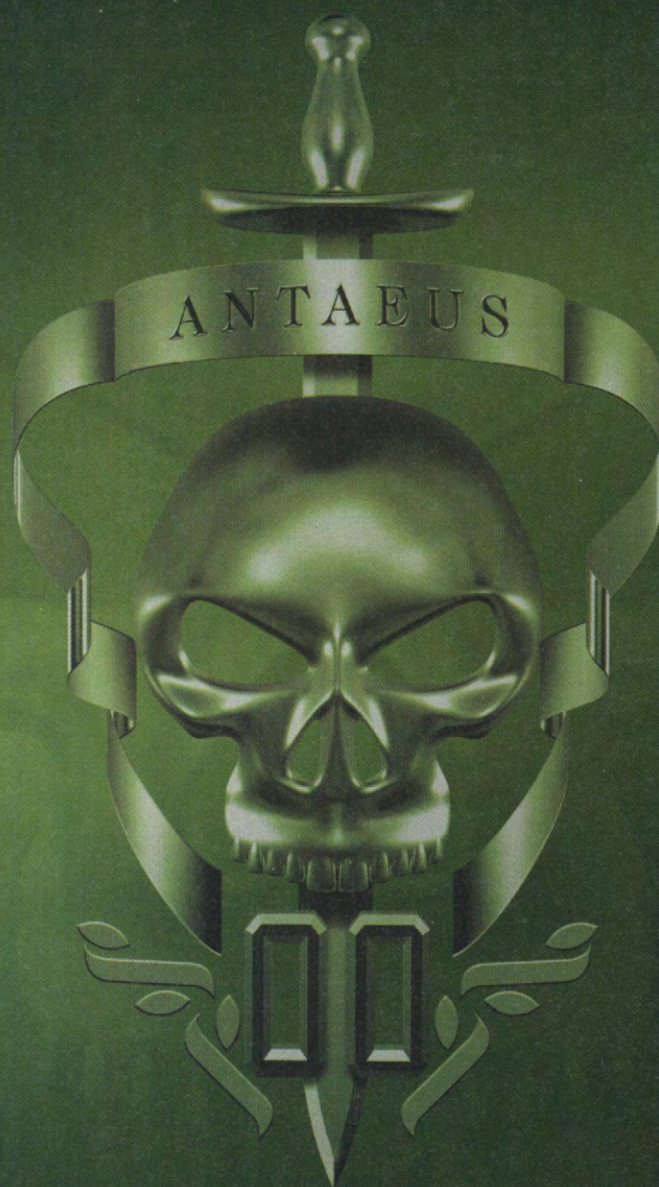
The year is 2032. Twenty years have passed since the Great Wars ended.

Somewhere in the depths of the Pacific ocean, a dark cabal prepares for battle.

Your only option is to relearn war.

Revive the last of the adaptive cruisers.

Fuse its systems with the chip contained minds of dead soldiers.

Only then will you have the ability to lend battle vehicles autonomous control.

Only then will you have the power to take on the might of the cabal.

These are Hostile Waters…

Rage

WATERWORLD

⊛ Promethean Designs • ETA spring • **www.prodesigns.com**

Powerboat racing is here with Aqua GT

R acing on water has been done before, but never as stylishly as Take 2 Interactive's *Aqua GT* looks set to be. Thankfully, developer Promethean Designs is steering well clear of any undue wackiness and is attempting to create a solid arcade racer. Featuring 20 different powerboats, which you can race through cities all around the world – including London, New York, Amsterdam and Tokyo – *Aqua GT* also has four different leagues to conquer. Each city can be played during the day or at night and with low or high tide, which in turn affects the water movement. We've actually played a preview version of the game and can confirm that the boats handle well and the graphics look every bit as good as the screenshots make them out to be. This is as close as you're going to get to the opening sequence of *The World Is Not Enough*.

That can't be the Thames. The water isn't brown.

THE PLAYING FIELDS

A gamer's paradise, The Playing Fields is a computer games bar where you can relax and play games the way they are meant to be played – with someone else. Just 30 seconds walk away from Warren Street tube station (Northern and Victoria lines), you can find it at 143 Whitfield Street, London.

Once there, you can jump on one of the 23 state-of-the-art machines on offer, and either play via a network or over the Net on games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Giants*, *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, *Sacrifice*, *Rune* and many others. Each machine boasts an AMD 1.1GHz processor, 128Mb SDRAM, a 17in monitor and a NVIDIA GeForce 2 GTS graphics card. It doesn't get much better than that.

You have to be aged at least 14 to play and ID may be required. The Playing Fields is open seven days a week from noon to 11pm (10pm on Sundays). For prices and more information, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

And if all that sounds good, you're in luck, as we've joined forces with The Playing Fields to offer you a free hour of play every month. Every issue we'll be printing a slip at the bottom of these pages. All you have to do is fill it in, take it to the Playing Fields and hand it in behind the bar. After that you can play for an hour free-of-charge and spend your money on a beer (or an orange fizzy pop if you're not old enough) instead.

Head to the Playing Fields for a free frag.

The PlayingFields
DISCOUNT SLIP

1 HOUR FREE WORTH £6

Name: .... Date Of Birth: ....

Address: ....

....

E-mail Address: ....

Tel No: .... Date: ....

⊛ This discount slip entitles one person to play for one hour free of charge on one occasion between March 8 and April 5, 2001, at The Playing Fields, 143 Whitfield Street, London, UK. You must be 14 years of age or older in order to participate in this offer. The slip must be filled in correctly and must be the original from a copy of PC ZONE, otherwise it will not be valid. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Only one slip per reader per issue.

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100% FREE
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"What does not kill you will make you wish it had."
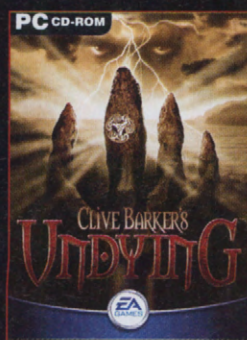
Clive Barker has shocked people in his books. He's terrified people in his films. Now he's created a game. Undying. Dare you play it?

www.uk.ea.com

available from
Virgin megastores
and all good games outlets

CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not

Despite average reviews, the *Delta Force* series keeps selling.

THE Virgin megastores TOP 10

FEB	MAR	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
RE	1	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
9	2	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
NE	3	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	HAVAS	95%
NE	4	QUAKE III: TEAM ARENA	ID	ACTIVISION	61%
7	5	SUDDEN STRIKE	CDV	CDV	86%
NE	6	THEME PARK INC	MAXIS	EA	50%
5	7	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
NE	8	DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR	NOVALOGIC	NOVALOGIC	69%
NE	9	MECHWARRIOR 4 – VENGEANCE	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	84%
NE	10	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER	BLADE INTERACTIVE	CODEMASTERS	67%

THE ChartTrack TOP10

FEB	MAR	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR	NOVALOGIC	NOVALOGIC	69%
1	2	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
2	3	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
3	4	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
NE	5	MECHWARRIOR 4 – VENGEANCE	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	84%
4	6	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
5	7	RED ALERT 2	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
NE	8	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	HAVAS	95%
7	9	COLIN MCRAE 2.0	CODEMASTERS	CODEMASTERS	86%
RE	10	AOE II: THE AGE OF KINGS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	89%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 2000)

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"It's great to see that the *Championship Manager* series is still a top seller. I'm surprised that there's still a chart-reaching number of people that don't already own the *Half-Life* games and need to buy the *Generations* pack!"

JakobG, Leicester

"It really is a shame to see another first-person shooter at the top of the charts; are the buying public really this linear? Oh well, anything's better than *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*. And it's also sad to see *Monkey Island* drop out of the Top 10, we can only hope that next month *Black & White* will be there at number one!"

Steve Chicken, Warrington

"*Giants* should be in the charts somewhere, that game is brilliant. And where's *Oni*? It's good to see *Half-Life* still in there, though. I would much rather have that than *Delta Force 3* any day."

Dead Collector

"I certainly don't agree with the number one title in the charts at the moment. I think *Delta Force: Land Warrior* is an incredibly unpolished game, with crappy animations and a piss poor engine. Rubbish."

Tristan McCarthy, Northants

"It's amazing how well *Millionaire* is doing. If things carry on it looks like there will be a copy in everyone's house by next week. Not mine, though, I'm not a nonce."

Monkey, Manchester

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

It's now a whole year since *The Sims* first entered the charts at number one, and it hasn't left the top ten since then. In fact, its add-on pack *Livin' it Up* has been keeping it company for a good few months now. With news of another expansion on the way, the future for the whining little critters looks well assured, even if most of us have had more than enough of them. But the most interesting entry has to be the new *Half-Life: Generations* pack, this time including the *Counter-Strike* mod. A fair share of people who already own the game must have gone out and bought it just to own a boxed copy of *CS*, making a mockery of Havas' reluctance not to release it on its own. Who knows, it could have reached the top spot if they had.

Mark Hill

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...
1 The Sims *(EA)*
2 Delta Force 2 *(Novalogic)*
3 CM 99/00 *(Eidos)*
4 Age Of Empires II *(Microsoft)*
5 Toy Story 2 *(3DO)*

2 YEARS AGO...
1 SimCity 3000 *(EA)*
2 Delta Force *(Novalogic)*
3 Half-Life *(Sierra)*
4 Baldur's Gate *(Interplay)*
5 Worms Armageddon *(Hasbro)*

5 YEARS AGO...
1 Screamer *(Virgin)*
2 Command & Conquer *(Virgin)*
3 Worms *(Team17)*
4 Rebel Assault 2 *(LucasArts)*
5 Hexen *(GT Interactive)*

PLAYED IN HONG

We knew *Steve Hill* liked *Championship Manager*, but we didn't think he'd go this far for a game

"HOW DO YOU FANCY GOING TO HONG KONG?"

Not the usual mid-afternoon call, but one that was enough to buck me out of my coma-like sleep. Sports Interactive had been invited to Hong Kong by the *resident Championship Manager* fan club, and had decided to take a journalist. Unable to find one, they *rang PC ZONE*'s finest. Having scarcely been further East than Leyton Orient before, the offer was promptly accepted.

Fast forward a month or so, and a pair of bleary-eyed men are stumbling around Hong Kong airport after two flights, three breakfasts, several time zones and a couple of hangovers. Not one to shirk a holiday, the younger sibling SI (Oliver Collyer)

has taken it upon himself to spread the word, although there is a tangible degree of apprehension. The whole trip has been set-up by email, and for all we know the chairman of the so-called Hong Kong *Championship Manager* Fan Club could well be a 15-year-old chancer.

WHITESIDE... ONSIDE!

Fortunately, the man brandishing a piece of paper bearing the name 'Oliver Collyer' is 26, and possibly the world's most organised person. A Manchester United fan since their 1985 FA Cup victory over Everton, Jacky Ip has been playing *CM* since day one, and set up the HKCM.com website three years ago. The fan club currently boasts 10,000 members, as well as a football team with a 70-

strong squad, presided over by Ip himself, whose playing days were prematurely ended by a knee injury.

It says much about Hong Kong's culture that football teams name themselves after computer games rather than pubs. It's a culture that has also embraced English football, with Premiership games broadcast live to an audience split mainly between United, Liverpool and Arsenal. *Championship Manager* co-exists comfortably with this passion, and it is believed that Hong Kong has some 60,000 players, although given the region's renowned piracy problems, the number actually owning a legal copy is far smaller.

MERSEY BLUES

The HKCM club are the acceptable face though, and the next day a dozen of them gather in the Cyber Sniper Café for a network game against the great white hopes of Collyer and Hill, playing as Everton and Liverpool respectively, with the rest drawn at random. It's a manic occasion, and

Bradford City. A visit to Anthony Leung's Derby yields only a 1-1 draw, raising the pressure for the home game against Jacky Ip's hard working Southampton. With a crowd gathering, Ip takes a 2-0 half time lead, sensationally adding a further three second half strikes for a total of five goals from five shots. Amazingly, my 20 shots earn only a late consolation goal, leading to

> ## "It says much about Hong Kong's culture that football teams name themselves after computer games rather than pubs"

one that brings the *Quake* players to a standstill to witness the commotion. Wrestling with jetlag and an unfamiliar Anfield outfit, a worthy 2-2 draw at computer opponents Arsenal is followed up by a dour 0-0 at home to Samuel Wong's stoic

howls of derision from the assembled crowd. The text messages rapidly follow, including such gems as 'Liverpoor' and 'Liverfool,' some of the youngsters showing a remarkable grasp of English, which is of course a prerequisite of playing the game.

Bright lights. Free food.
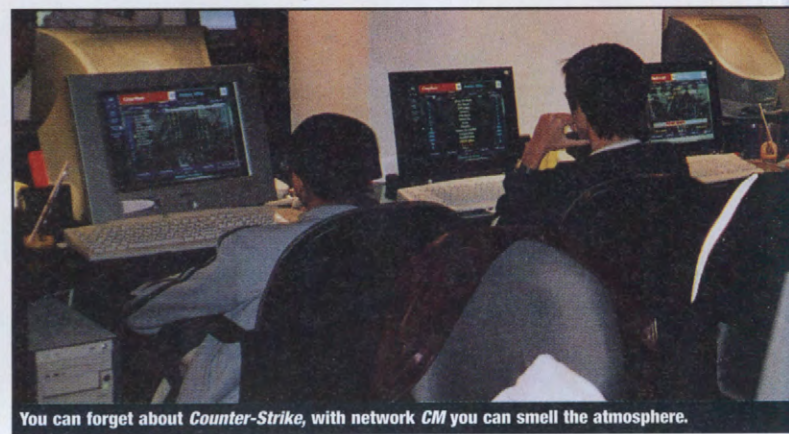
You can forget about *Counter-Strike*, with network *CM* you can smell the atmosphere.

KONG

SPECIAL REPORT

Collyer does at least restore some English dignity with a top five finish, despite admitting to having never played that version of the game.

PROBABLY THE BEST GAME IN THE WORLD

The following day sees a visit to the impressive Hong Kong stadium, where a crowd of more than 30,000 watch Norway lift the Carlsberg Cup. The real action is to be found the next afternoon though, with Collyer making a guest appearance for the team named after his creation (see match report). A barbecue is held in his honour in the evening, before which a surreal question and answer session takes place. With Jacky Ip as interpreter, Collyer is cross-examined about the game, including ferocious accusations that Gary Neville is under-rated. The fans are certainly a mixed bag, encompassing children, students and even a university professor. Not to mention Frank Ng, the vice-president of the fan club, and a man with a freak knowledge of English non-league football, garnered from playing *CM* and perusing Non League On The Net.

None of them drink, but as the meal progresses, they become increasingly excitable, bombarding us with questions about English football. When the time comes to leave, Collyer is virtually mobbed in the street, and has to be bundled into a taxi, describing the experience as "Mindblowing, it's like being famous."

On the flight home, he reveals "It's unbelievable. It's a shame my brother didn't come as well so he could have seen it. It made me feel proud of what we'd achieved over the years. It was amazing, totally unexpected and good to see." It certainly was, but why leave it at that? We've heard there's a fan club in Brazil. **PCZ**
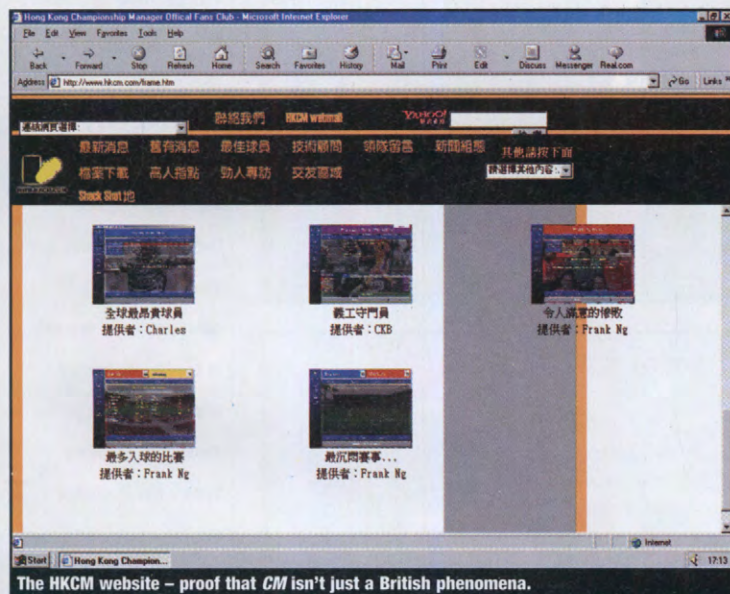
The HKCM website – proof that *CM* isn't just a British phenomena.

HONG KONG FOOTY
HKCM 3 WINNING ELEVEN 2
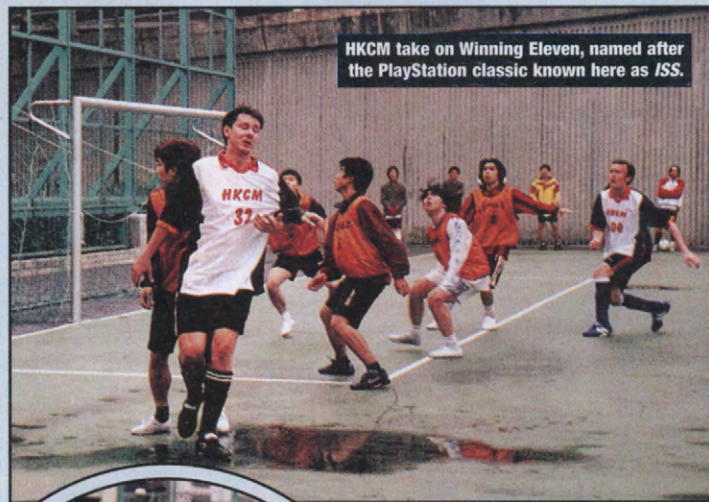
HKCM take on Winning Eleven, named after the PlayStation classic known here as *ISS*.

Collyer makes the number 100 shirt his own.

HKCM Vs Winning Eleven. From left to Right: ...you must be joking.

A two-goal fusillade from loan signing Oliver Collyer inspired HKCM to a famous victory in this five-goal thriller. With the game poised at 1-1, half-time saw an inspired substitution from master tactician Jacky Ip, as he threw on the twin towers of Collyer and Steve Hill, both signed in a last-minute one-match deal.

It was a decision that would reap immediate dividends, as the pair swiftly combined to force HKCM into a 3-1 lead. With Hill assuming a more withdrawn role, and Collyer playing as a lone striker, the latter made the most of his first glimpse of goal, driving the ball low to the keeper's right to spark wild celebrations. Minutes later, the feat was repeated sending the duo into Dreamland. Winning Eleven clawed themselves back into the game with a late strike, but HKCM held on resolutely in an often physical battle, with Hill using his weight effectively, despite clearly suffering from the effects of a pre-match Vietnamese buffet.

Collyer spurned chances of a memorable hat-trick, but was ultimately delighted with his contribution. "It was perfect. I really hoped it would work out like that. It was funny because we saw the first half and Jacky was standing on the touch-line like Alex Ferguson, waving and pointing and all the rest of it. I was really hoping I'd get on for the second half, which he'd hinted that we would. And it was brilliant because I came on to great cheers from the fan club. That was bizarre enough, donning the number 100 shirt, proud to wear it, came on at 1-1 and scored two goals. It was the stuff dreams are made of. I was a bit disappointed not to get a hat-trick actually, but at least we won. It was amazing and quite surreal to come on to great cheers and score two goals. It's something I'll never forget."

The Man who KNOWS

ON-LINE-NO-LIFE

The twisted world of *EverQuest* has again made shocking headlines. Reports have surfaced of a 20-hour-a-day addict from Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, whose sickness reached a peak when he actually took a laptop along to his daughter's birth. The freak was apparently helping a less-experienced player do battle with a particularly tenacious enemy, and decided to take the fight into the delivery room. The child is now seven months old, but only knows her father as FlintAnvil Steelheart, a 32nd level druid. Her mother, Manda Erickson, 24, wept: "My fiancé and I have no relationship. I speak, he grunts. I ask him to do something, I do it myself. I want to go back to work, but I do not trust him alone with our daughter, simply because when I am here she will be crying and he will not do anything about it." Not necessarily, he might assault her like the American *EverQuest* addict we reported on last issue.

While slack-jawed septic tanks lose their minds to online gaming, a survey suggests that their British counterparts are "not interested". According to Internet monitoring company, NetValue, one in five UK Internet users visited a games site in December, making for a total of some 2,400,000 people. However, only 194,000 of them actually took part in an online game, as opposed to in the US where more than five million are regularly involved. It'll never catch on.

As reported here about two bleeding years ago, Shiny Entertainment is to design a game based on *The Matrix*, according to a report on Variety.com. The Wachowski brother's blockbuster film has been linked with Dave Perry's development studio for some time, and the game is expected to be released in conjunction with the sequel, although it is not clear whether the deal covers the planned follow-up films. It's a major scoop for Perry, who is believed to be a huge fan of Keanu Reeves, particularly the picture of him sweating in a vest.

And finally, a survey conducted by Eidos has revealed gamers would prefer to have penetrative sexual intercourse with an imaginary character in a foreign city than receive a free PC. The entirely pointless poll on its company website asked: "What would you trade your partner for this Valentine's Day?" The options were a PlayStation2, an Xbox, a Gamecube, a top of the range PC or a weekend in Paris with Lara Croft. 28 per cent of voters opted for the weekend in Paris, while the PC came a close second with 21 per cent. Only 19 per cent of gamers polled said they wouldn't trade anything for their loved ones. The other 81 percent presumably realised their fist is always going to be there.

OUT OF AFRICA

★ Twylit Productions • ETA Summer • **www.twylit.com/zuluwar**

Zulu Wars: a turn-based war game that tells it like it is

These are dark days for Britain. Where once we gloriously conquered less advanced countries and submitted them to the will of the Queen, we now have hooligans singing *Rule Britannia* as they smash shop windows in Holland. Where once we massacred defenceless men armed with nothing but spears by emptying rifles and cannons into their uncolonnised bodies, we now have tourists wearing white socks and sandals showing the whole of the Mediterranean just how civilised we are. While this is still a nation of insular xenophobes content to forget – or even worse, glorify – the atrocious facts of imperialism, South African developer Twylit Productions is doing its bit to expose them with *Zulu Wars*. Its aim is to "build a product that celebrates the magnificence of Africa" and, while some might say that a turn-based strategy game isn't the best way to do it, *Zulu Wars* might prove to be a big surprise. Set during the colonisation of Natal, the game has been designed through a great deal of historical research and allows you to take either side. Battles can range from massive skirmishes where you control more than 30,000 units, to smaller missions where you only have a handful of soldiers at your command. Your decisions will have to take into account such factors as morale, fatigue, visibility and health of your troops and could make multiplayer games quite interesting. An add-on pack is already planned for next year containing extra battles, as Twylit tries to educate the world about this important chapter in African history.

If it plays as good as it looks, Twylit is onto a winner.

Rifles versus spears. That sounds fair.

During the night, old Perkins got his leg bitten sort of... off.

TICKER TAPE

PCZONE READER AWARDS 2000

VOTE NOW!

Just over a week to get your votes in… well, what are you waiting for?

CATEGORIES

BEST FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
Star Trek: Voyager, Gunman Chronicles, KISS Psycho Circus, Project IGI, Thief II

BEST STRATEGY GAME
Shogun: Total War, Ground Control, Red Alert 2, Earth 2150, Sudden Strike, Homeworld: Cataclysm, Call To Power 2, The Sims

BEST RPG
Deus Ex, Vampire: The Masquerade, Planescape: Torment, Baldur's Gate II, Diablo II, Icewind Dale

BEST ACTION/ ADVENTURE
Escape From Monkey Island, Hitman, Rune, Severance: Blade Of Darkness, Giants

BEST DRIVING GAME
Colin McRae 2.0, Midtown Madness 2, Grand Prix 3, Insane, F1 Championship 2000

BEST SIMULATION
B-17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth, Combat Flight Sim 2, Comanche Hokum, StarLancer, Terminus

BEST SPORTS GAME
Tony Hawk's 2, Championship Manager 00/01, FIFA 2001, PGA Championship Golf 2000, Open Tennis 2000

BEST ONLINE GAME
Counter-Strike, EverQuest: The Ruins Of Kunark, Ultima Online: Renaissance, Allegiance, Starpeace

GAME OF THE YEAR
Deus Ex, Championship Manager 00/01, The Sims, Shogun: Total War, Planescape: Torment, Tony Hawk's 2, Star Trek: Voyager, Baldur's Gate II

BEST PUBLISHER
Eidos Interactive, Activision, Electronic Arts, Havas Interactive, Infogrames, Take 2 Interactive, Microsoft, Codemasters

BEST DEVELOPER
Creative Assembly, Ion Storm, BioWare, Sports Interactive

BEST USE OF GRAPHICS
Severance: Blade Of Darkness, Sacrifice, Vampire, Rune, Alice, Giants

BEST USE OF SOUND
Escape From Monkey Island, Deus Ex, Sacrifice, Tony Hawk's 2, Shogun: Total War, Thief II

MOST ORIGINAL GAME
Deus Ex, The Sims, Giants, Shogun, Counter-Strike

Use the form to the right or email your nominees to awards@pczone.co.uk.

PCZONE READER AWARDS 2000 VOTING FORM

BEST FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

BEST STRATEGY GAME

BEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE GAME

BEST DRIVING GAME

BEST SIMULATION

BEST SPORTS GAME

BEST ONLINE GAME

GAME OF THE YEAR

BEST PUBLISHER

BEST DEVELOPER

BEST USE OF GRAPHICS

BEST USE OF SOUND

MOST ORIGINAL GAME

Name:

Job Title:

Address:

Postcode:

E-mail: Daytime Telephone:

☐ Please tick if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies

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✪ TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Entries with all nominations filled out correctly will be entered into the prize draw and winners will be selected at random after the closing date. The editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into and all winners will be notified by post. This competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing or any other companies associated with the Awards. Only one entry per reader. No cash alternatives will be offered. Submission of entry will be taken as acceptance of these rules.

SEND YOUR VOTES TO: Helen Cribb, *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 5FF.

✪ All nominations must reach us by **March 16**, so please start sending them in right away. A photocopy of the voting form or a postcard are fine if you don't want to cut up your copy of the mag, just don't forget to include all the details required. Either this, or you can vote by sending an email to awards@pczone.co.uk.

HOTSHOTS

War is hell but *Independence War 2* is beautiful

INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

⭐ Infogrames • Out summer 2001

There hasn't been a truly classic space-combat sim for yonks, especially considering *X – Beyond The Frontier* was chiefly a trade-and-explore sim. Back in the golden age when competitors to the *X-Wing* crown were popping up all over the place, *I-War* managed to hold its head up high due to its stunning graphics and an intuitive control system. With the sequel, Particle Systems is hoping to bring it up to date and, as you can see, it has already succeeded with the visuals. Driven by a strong plot, *I-War 2* isn't content to be a brainless all-out blaster, and you will be able to upgrade your ship and join organisations in the highly developed *I-War* universe.
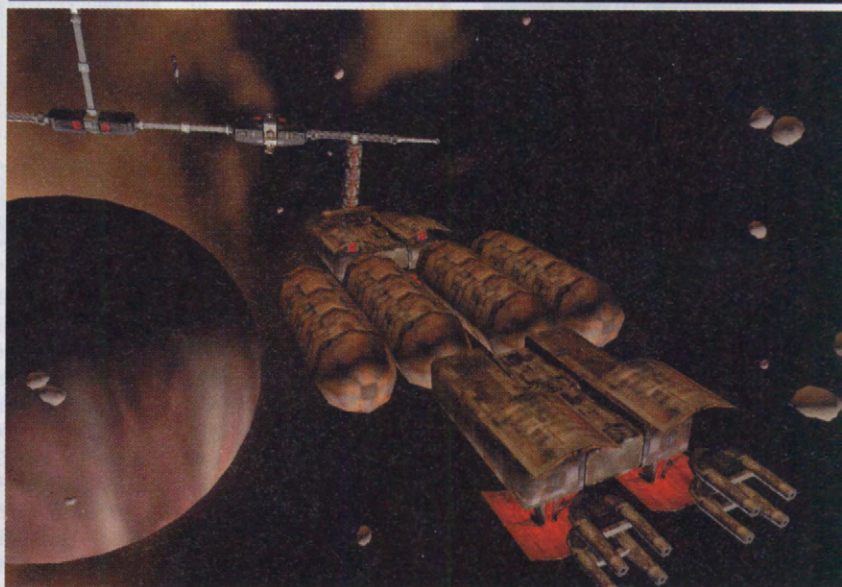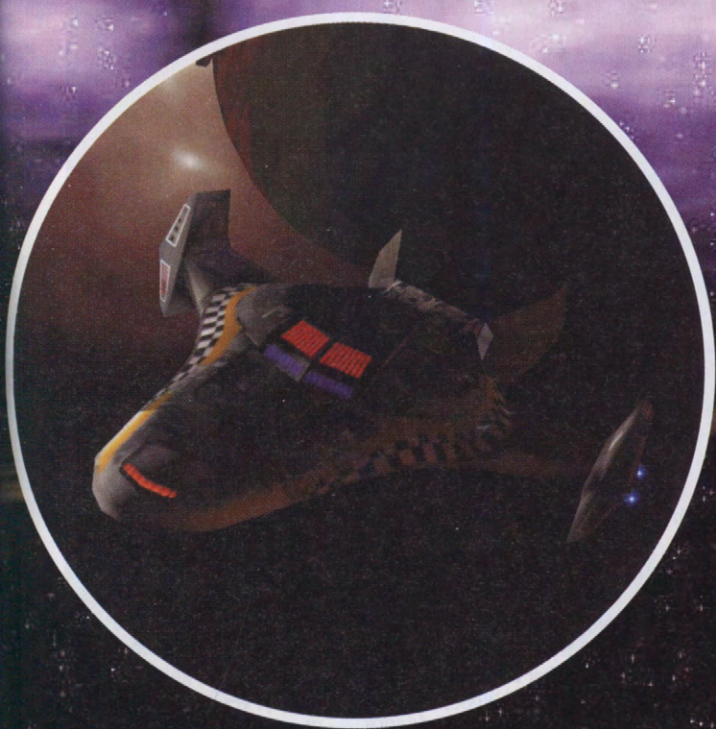
MAILBOX

**Chickens, cheapskates and David Letterman's golf.
You're a strange bunch aren't you?**

⭐ ANSWERED BY Dave Woods

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

For the next six months, *PC ZONE* will be giving away not one, but two of those wonderful GameVoice devices from Microsoft to the writer of the Star Letter. Using these, you can communicate with other players – including the lucky friend you give your second GameVoice to – online and give yourself a massive advantage over the Luddites who have to stop and type instructions. They're valued at £49.99 each, and are worth every penny. We know 'cause we use them.

YOU BOUNDER

In your 100th issue you printed the results of the DIV Game Design competition. You asked what game *Vertically Challenged* was based on. The answer is *Bounder*, an old game that I used to run on an Amstrad 6128. It had a purely top-down view, and you could tell the height of the ball by how large it was compared with the ground. Various surfaces could be bounced upon, some making you roll and some making you jump really high. The aim was to get to the goal on each level without landing on the water or mud. Hope that's answered your question.

Shortypaul, via email

⭐ **And what a fantastic game it was. Now where's that emulator...**

CHEAP

I feel I must follow up on the letter from Ryan Snook and your reply (*PCZ* issue 100). You seem to have taken the attitude "big games with fancy graphics require ninja PCs, so you're just going have to shell out for a new one every two years."

Well I'm sorry, but that just doesn't cut any ice with me. Two and a half years ago I bought my (first) PC, which was then pretty much top of the range: a PII 333MHz with 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb graphics card, since updated to a Voodoo 3. Because I didn't know what I was doing (don't laugh), I got it from a High Street retailer and it cost me nigh on £1,500, but even by shopping around you'd be looking at the best part of a grand.

I fit the demographic that I suspect many PC gamers belong to, ie grew up in the '80s playing on the Spectrum and C64, now in my late 20s early 30s with mortgage, wife and a young family (or planning one). I don't have the sort of cash you need to upgrade constantly and what's more I suspect the majority of PC owners don't either. A quick look at this month's chart appears to confirm this. *Red Alert 2*, *Champ Man*, *Gunman*, *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*, *Sudden Strike*, *The Sims*, *Monkey Island*. That's seven out of the top ten best selling

⭐ **STAR LETTER**

games that are low spec. Every month I look at the charts and see people moaning "wot no *Deus Ex*". Well I for one wasn't surprised when it dropped out of the charts after two months – if less than half of your target audience can't get it to run on their PC, then of course you're going to sell a reduced number of copies – best game since *Half-Life* or not.

You gave *Black & White* 95 per cent, yet if the minimum system really is a PIII 650 like you say, then exactly the same will happen to it as well. Of course I accept that technology advances, and so do games, otherwise we'd all still be playing *SimCity* on our 486's, but the problem with PC gaming seems to be that the technology advances so fast, yet is so expensive as well – compare my £1,500 PC, which lasts three years, to a PlayStation you could have bought five years ago for £200 (the price of a new graphics card for your PC), yet is only now being phased out. It's no wonder PC

⭐ The Sims don't need a high-powered machine to grumble about not being fed. Is that why they've been in the charts for a year?

games developers are struggling – if you spend millions of pounds developing a game that is so advanced hardly anyone has the kit to play it, then, of course, you're going to lose money. Yet, as games like *Shogun* show, you can still have fancy 3D graphics, and be a cutting edge, benchmark game, and run on low spec systems. *Shogun* runs like a dream in 800x600 on my machine. I've already pointed out the fact that the charts are dominated by low spec games – it's not just a one off thing. Go back and look at the charts over the past few months and you'll see the same. So developers take note – if you want to actually make any money, develop a good game that the majority of your audience can actually play.

Neil Dunn

⭐ **I didn't actually say that you're going to have to bite the bullet and buy a new PC. And, as you pointed out, there are loads of games that run perfectly on old machines. Hell, you could get *Solitaire* to run on a 386 and that's all my partner ever plays. You've got the choice. Personally I think it would be a damn shame if developers didn't push the boundaries and create masterpieces like *Deus Ex* and *Black & White*. You do make a good point though. As recent PlayStation releases have shown, developers have consistently dredged more from the PlayStation hardware, and this hasn't happened to the same degree on PC. As they say, you pays your money... And seeing as you haven't got any, have a couple**

Now that you get two CDs every month you should find all of the mods featured in Modwatch on our cover discs.

Black & White: pure genius? You'd better believe it.

of GameVoice thingies for free.

MODWATCH

Can you please put all the mods you review in your mag on your cover CD? It's really annoying seeing these games and then realising that it will take me hours to download them. It has taken me at least 45 minutes to download a 2.41Mb file. It will take me literally all day to download something as big as 30Mb and only 30 seconds to download it off your cover CD. Please – you did say you would try and put them on.

Ray Smith

✪ Take a look on this month's cover CD for nearly all the mods featured in this month's Modwatch, along with a few others for good measure. Now we have two CDs each issue this will happen every month. The only time we can't run a mod is if we don't get permission from the author, or if there are copyright or obscenity issues.

UNFINISHED PAP

Firstly, congrats on the 100th birthday, I am proud to say that I have been with you from the start. I just finished reading the *Black & White* review, and while I haven't played it yet, I'm almost certain that it's brilliant. I have the same taste in games you do, and I rarely disagree with your reviews. I have followed the progress of *B&W* since you started covering it, in The Lionhead

Diaries. I think it has been roughly three years in the making, and I'd just like to say how good it is to see that Lionhead took its time with it and released it when it was good and ready.

Too often we see games rushed out before they are properly finished, ultimately not making anyone happy. I'm sure that for the developers, each and every one of its game creations is like its very own baby, and

> **"I don't have the sort of cash you need to upgrade constantly, and I suspect the majority of PC owners don't either"**
>
> **NEIL DUNN MOANING LIKE A STUDENT**

they want to make them as good as they can possibly before releasing them to the world, to face either acclaim or mass criticism. But the publishers of their games usually end up rushing them to meet deadlines, for Christmas and so on, and more often than not the game is released while the developers are not truly happy with it.

Credit to Lionhead I say. Why can't all developers stand up for their rights and not let themselves be pushed around by publishers? Developers should take note, and I would humbly suggest they all unite, and at least set out some sort of code of practice to prevent these bully-boy tactics once and for all.

Yohan Pathi, London

✪ Creating games these days is a daunting expereience. You're right, most developers see their games as a labour of love, and don't want to release a title until it's perfect, but in the real world, even without intervention from publishers, a game can get derailed. Every game has a budget, and ultimately a deadline and at some point time has to be called on a project.

CHICKEN SHIT

I'm not going to suck up to you to get myself in your glorious magazine, which I read every month and I believe is the best around. Anyhow, I am insulted at the obvious omission of a certain creature from Lionhead Studio's latest (and best) game *Black & White*. Where is the chicken? You can't have *Black & White* chickens (to the best of my knowledge – I haven't actually got the game yet), but as everyone knows, a chicken in *Black & White* would totally rule! I find it insulting that they'd leave it out (Just wait until you see my name!) Who is with me?

Steve Chicken, via email

✪ We are for a start.

FORE!

Over all the years that I've been playing computer

games, I've noticed that behind the normal gamers, lurk a far darker breed. Each one closeted away, hunched over their computers in darkened rooms with the curtains fully closed. Squatting, shuffling denizens of their particularly sordid genre. In fact, figures who would make Fagin look like the model of social acceptance. These huddled troglodytes, clutching their battered mice like meths drinkers, are for the most part hidden from the bright and joyful world of PC gaming.

However, I was horror stricken to see that not only had you decided to put a review for one of their sick and twisted games in your magazine, but, in fact, you did a huge section in a recent edition. At least six pages. Yes, I'm talking about the sad degenerates who actually spend their lives playing golf games. It's sickening. No blood! No unrealistically large guns! No chance of ever shooting a terrorist! No chance of killing innocent bystanders, which usually means the end of the game but what the hell! No power armour, or legions of sword swinging natives, or mutants, or dinosaurs, or zombies ready to pop your head open like a peanut and suck out your brains. It's depraved. And, to openly play to their twisted sense of entertainment seems very dangerous indeed. These people need professional help, not bloody open encouragement.

Ozrik, via email

✪ You are extremely lucky that you didn't provide your full address with your letter because Keith Pullin wants to have a go at you with his wood. Actually, thinking about it you might just be right...

JAY LENO?

At last someone has spoken the honest truth, and he works for your magazine. I refer to Paul Presley and the *PC ZONE* Supertest on Golf games in your February issue.

Back in the olden days when the Amiga ruled the world, the game I probably played the most was *Microprose Golf*, which later surfaced as *David Letterman's* (sic) *Golf* on the PC. I am proud to say I did manage to find it on PC years ago and still have the original on several 3.5in floppies. The only trouble is that I cannot make it run on my modern PC. When I try it runs into a memory issue. Does Paul still play it and if so how? I would love to play this past master again.

Keith Hoskins, Via e-mail

✪ We had *David Leadbetter's Golf* running in the office while we were doing our research for the Supertest, and it still rocks today – albeit in a 16-colour, this is really a bit crap sort of way. The memory issues you are getting with the game are due to the legacy of DOS – try shutting down into DOS and running it from there, that's how we managed to get it working. **PZ**

"Ozrik, you dare to besmirch me?"

Make it so...

BRIDGE

Place yourself in total control of a Federation starship and feel the power.
Chris Anderson did – he hasn't been the same since

Simulated Warbird 1

Player

2.85 km

Your ship will take damage in combat. Take steps to repair it or watch it fall apart, a bit like this.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Totally Games
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.bridgecommander.com
OUT Autumn 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

✪ Captain your ship from the captain's chair rather than the pilot's
✪ In-depth tactical combat and deep-space exploration
✪ All your favourite *Star Trek* villains
✪ A space sim from Totally Games – what could possibly go wrong?

CV

TOTALLY GAMES

Totally Games gained its 'official' existence as a games company in 1995, but it has been working on games a lot longer than that under the guidance of its creative director Lawrence Holland. Most of the games below have won awards for the company, a sure sign that *Bridge Commander* is in safe and talented hands.

1988 Battlehawks 1942

1989 Their Finest Hour: The Battle Of Britain

1991 Secret Weapons Of The Luftwaffe

1993 X-Wing

1994 Tie Fighter

1997 X-Wing Vs Tie Fighter

1999 X-Wing Alliance

PHOTO NASA, The Hubble Heritage Team (AURA/STScI)

There is enormous potential here for confusion. Given that *Bridge Commander* is coming your way soon from none other than Totally Games, the creator of the *X-Wing* series, I can see people looking at *Bridge Commander* and immediately thinking '*Star Trek* meets *X-Wing* and bumps into *Wing Commander* along the way. Actually, no, you're wrong, stop thinking that please. *Bridge Commander* is in fact quite a

> ### *Bridge Commander* places you in the driving seat of the huge starships of the *Next Generation* universe and gives you total control over every one of your crew

unique take on the space combat genre. While just about every other space combat sim out there places you in the cockpit of a small fighter and sends you out to fight in open space, *Bridge Commander* places you in the driving seat of the huge

Starships from the *Next Generation* universe, and gives you total control over each and every one of your crew. There *is* combat, but it's very tactical and unlike anything you've experienced before in a space combat sim. To get your head round this rather unusual concept, think of it as more of a simulation than an action game, a simulation of Federation captaincy, complete with all the trimmings, and with you in the captain's seat. It has to be said that the move away

from frenetic space combat is a brave one on the part of Totally Games. It would have been easy for them to build on everything they've learned with the *X-Wing* titles, and bring *Star Trek* fans the kind of first-class space combat sim that *Star Wars* fans have enjoyed for so long. As it stands, *Bridge Commander* relies more heavily on strategy than action for success in battle. It's an intriguing prospect, and it goes something like this...

ACTION CHESS

Bridge Commander is essentially a freeform exploration game with large dollops of tactical combat.

COMMANDER

Another day, another tear in the time-space continuum.

"Can anyone smell burning?"

Don't just sit there, DO something.

"I'm not sure what's going on here captain, but I think something's blown up."
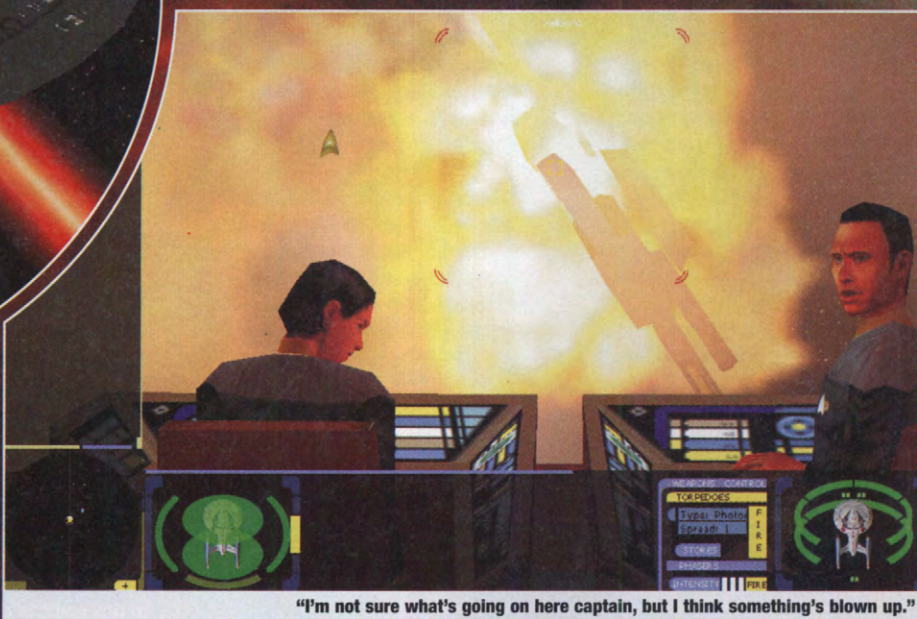
The development team is making great efforts to ensure that you are immersed in the game universe and familiarised with your crew before you even see battle, but sooner or later you will have a difference of opinion with one of the other races in the game. When this happens, you will go into combat mode. This is worth looking at in a fair amount of detail since it comprises a large proportion of the game. You can, if you wish, dive straight into battle at the first sign of conflict, but it makes more sense to go into tactical mode and look at your options. Your Tactical Officer will be on hand to give you all the information you need to prepare yourself for battle. He can give you an overview of the ship and the condition it's in, and is ready to carry out your battle orders. You can order him to carry out different battle manoeuvres, fire at will, or fire on your command. Basically, while you sit in your chair at the helm of the bridge, he does all the dirty work, but because he does only what you tell him to do, your actions have a direct bearing on the outcome of the battle. This approach to combat further emphasises how Totally Games wants you to feel you are in control of the ship and its crew, even in battle, rather than encouraging you to jump straight in and mix it up with the enemy on a one-to-one basis. You *can* zoom in and take control of the ship and its weapons yourself, but chances are your expertise in this area will be somewhat lacking to start with, so you might want to get to know the game very well before proving your ineptitude in battle.

I have to admit, when the game was first demonstrated to me I was a little sceptical as to how engrossing this more casual approach to battle might be. But watching the development team play the game, it became clear that there is a lot to think about in the heat of battle. Knowing which weapons to use and when is paramount, as is timing and choosing which part of the enemy ship to attack. You can give *very* specific instructions as to exactly where you want your lasers to land on the enemy ship, weakening areas that are vital to its operation. You also have to keep an eye on all parts of your own ship and order repairs when necessary, transfer energy from strong areas to damaged ones, and manoeuvre the ship in such a way that your weak

A scene from the rendered intro. Not much going on there...

side is not exposed to your enemy when you home in for the kill.

As you can see, there's a lot going on in the combat scenes, but unlike games such as *X-Wing*, *Bridge Commander* is quite slow-paced, and you will have plenty of time to make decisions in battle – you just have to hope they are the right ones. It's not entirely dissimilar to submarine combat in many respects, with the adversaries playing hide and seek and slowly weakening each other's vessels from a distance. Expect some long battles in this game, particularly at later stages when the enemy ships are bigger and stronger and will take a lot of whittling down.

PEACE, MAN

That's not to say that the missions are all about picking on someone you don't like and blowing them up – in fact, most of them are quite the opposite. One of the missions we saw involved a conflict between the Klingons and the Romulans, both of whom believed they had been double-crossed by the other. In this situation, you don't want to kill either of them, but merely diffuse the situation. Peaceful negotiations are not an option here, you must play the diplomat by intercepting both ships and making sure they don't destroy

> **"Gives the player the feeling that he is immersed in a living universe rather than merely churning through missions"**

each other in battle. This is achieved by ramming the ships and diverting them from their course. So while most of the game is primarily combat, there are missions that involve pure diplomacy, or searching and exploring inside nebulae. But most of the missions exist to drive along the story, which unfolds as you play the missions. Rather than sit through cut-scenes explaining the story before you jump into the action, the tale develops through the actions of the races in the game during the missions, thus seamlessly blending the action and

MEET THE CREW

There are many actions you can take from your chair on the bridge...

"Replicate some beers for me, ensign."

Each member of the crew is skilled in a different area, and selective use of their talents is necessary for the ongoing success of your mission. These are the main areas of the bridge, and the actions you can take at each one:

TACTICAL

This is where you will spend most of your time during combat. From here you can configure and activate defence systems, aim and target weapons, and order specific attacks and manoeuvres in battle.

ENGINEERING

From this position you can allocate repairs and even prioritise the order in which the repair team carries out its work. You can also transfer power from one part of the ship to another if need be.

SCIENCE

Your Science Officer can scan objects on launch probes. You will use him mostly on exploration missions to get a full report on objects and locations in the area.

HELM

Come here to navigate through space and set your course in non-combat situations. This is the place to come if you fancy a spot of exploring, a bit like a sort of futuristic Christopher Columbus... or perhaps not.

FIRST OFFICER

Set alert levels, receive vital information on how much damage your ship has taken and communicate with characters from other ships from this position.

BATTLE STATIONS

Combat may be slower paced in *Bridge Commander* than in other space combat games, but it is no less spectacular

Big ships mean big battles and, of course, big explosions. The combat sequences are a joy to watch, with visually stunning scenes such as this one being commonplace. Of course, if you watch the action from this viewpoint you are likely to miss something important happening on the bridge, such as vital bits of your ship falling off at the worst possible moments. You can't have everything.

"One minute until warp core breach... er, I mean, one sec..."

BIRTH OF A GENRE

A typical scene from *Bridge Commander*

Note how you are watching the action as opposed to sitting in the thick of it. *Bridge Commander* is the first space combat game to favour tactical combat over frenetic dog-fighting action, and playing it feels very different from anything that's gone before. This particular scene is perhaps a little laid-back, you can go into full-screen mode to view the action if you wish, but the emphasis in this game is on tactics and if you don't communicate with your crew in the heat of battle you will soon find yourself up a certain creek. It's difficult at this stage to predict how well this type of combat will work without having played the game ourselves for any great length of time, but in theory the emphasis on strategy should make for a unique playing experience. All will no doubt be revealed when the game rolls in for review.
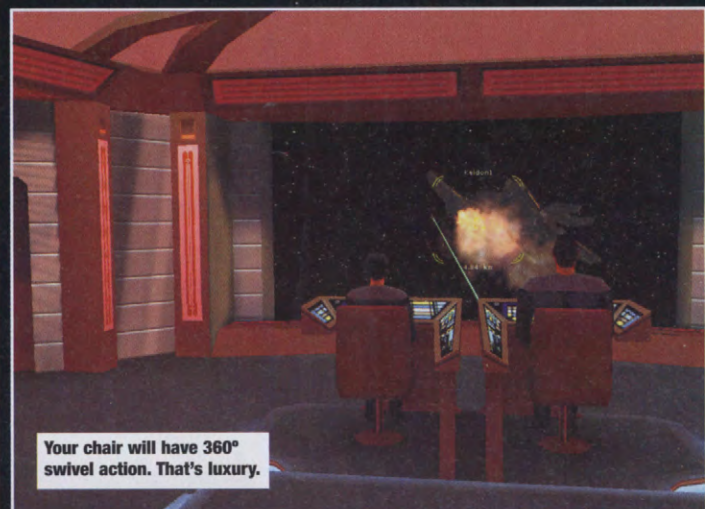
Your chair will have 360° swivel action. That's luxury.

Phasers and torpedoes were the only weapons of destruction we saw in the game, but several more are planned.

Weird bloke puts his point across patiently. We don't believe a word of it.

A big ship sits in space, looking nice and detailed.
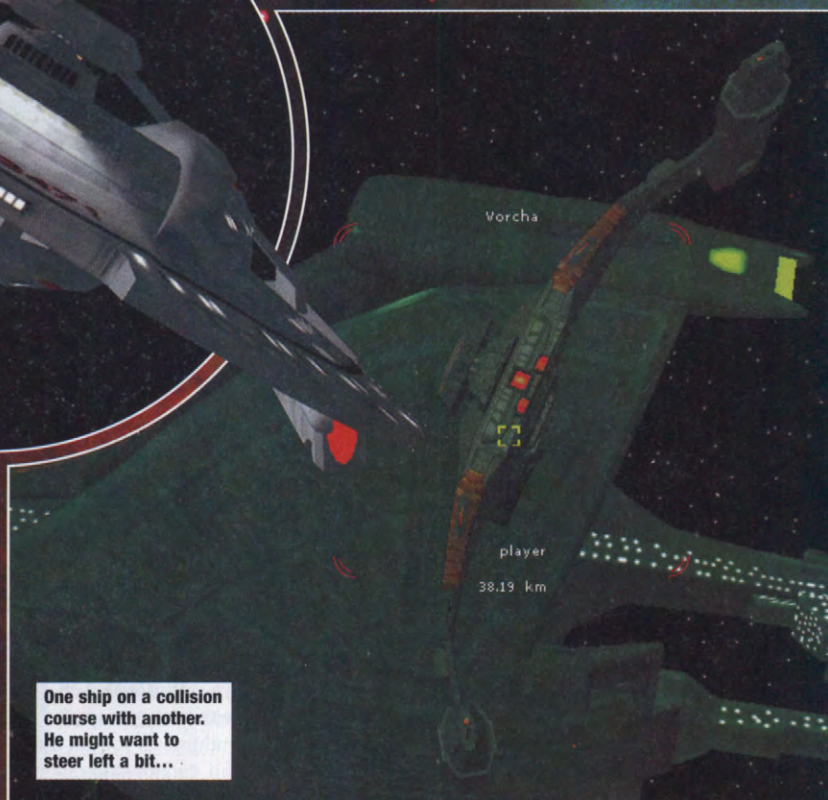
One ship on a collision course with another. He might want to steer left a bit...

When your ship goes into red alert status, it generally means all is not well.

storyline and giving the player a greater sense of immersion.

Your actions in the missions also determine how much further you progress in the game. If you don't get to places on time, achieve certain goals or prevent major conflicts, it's game over. Of course, you will also lose the game if your ship is blown to tiny pieces in battle: death has a habit of hampering further progress in most games and *Bridge Commander* is true to this tradition.

Gameplay is surprisingly free-flowing compared to the linear nature of most space combat sims, which simply give you one mission to complete after another. There are a number of things you can get on with at any given time. For example, if your ship is in a bit of a mess you can warp back to base for repairs assuming a) your warp

engines have not been fried by enemy scum, and b) you have time to do it before your next mission is due to begin. You can also set about your given goals at any time in any order you see fit, again underlining the open-ended structure of the game and giving the player the feeling that he is immersed in a living universe rather than merely churning through one mission after another.

ALL IN THE GAME
You could be forgiven for thinking at this point that the whole game is based on combat. While it's true that *Bridge Commander* is fundamentally a tactical combat game, there is enough going on between missions to provide a brief but much-needed diversion from all the head-scratching and decision making forced on the player in the

combat scenes. Every event that takes place in the gameworld, which may or may not lead to missions, are related to you by the ship's crew, all of whom have unique dialogue for most given situations, and can provide detailed information on where you stand in the great scheme of things if called upon to do so. You will also have lengthy conversations with other races in the game, and you should pay attention to these before deciding whether to take action or assume a more diplomatic role in the proceedings. All of this serves to set the scene for the missions, perhaps in a much better way than the cut-scenes we are used to seeing before combat in most games of this type. Multiplayer should prove interesting too: you can only take control of the Sovereign or Galaxy ships in the

single-player game, but in multiplayer you can take the helm of the ships belonging to other races. It will be interesting to see how players react to a more strategic multiplayer experience than they are probably used to.

Total immersion and strategic and challenging combat are the goals then for the *Bridge Commander* team, and if Totally Games can pull off its neatest trick to date, there is every possibility we will have a rather engrossing game on our hands, perhaps even a new genre. Could *Bridge Commander* possibly signify a return to strategic thinking after a long stream of mindless blasters? Probably not, but it's certainly a title that we will be following closely throughout its development cycle. Watch this space. **PCZ**

Like a streak of lightening flashing across the sky.

Just gobsmacking.

Ouch. Tanks can become ovens in a matter of sec[onds]

Switch off the automatic pilot
IL-2 STURMOVIK

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER 1C/Maddox Games
PUBLISHER Blue Byte/Ubi Soft
WEBSITE http://www.bluebyte.net
OUT Spring 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Graphically, this is probably the most realistic sim yet produced
- Maddox Games are aircraft engineers first, programmers second. So you can expect 100 per cent realism
- Potential to be first proper 'battlefield' game with full land, sea and air targets that are all AI-controlled
- We've said it before, and we'll say it again: this is the new age of flight sims

A highly-detailed German Recon plane.

Strapped in and good to go, Daniel Emery taxis off in an IL-2

With every hobby, you get enthusiasts. And with every group of enthusiasts you get the sad, cannot-stop-talking about-it-know-all types who generally bore the tits off anyone and everyone who will listen to them about their hobby. Trainspotters going on about the BoBo Diesel 233 00 class Reg No 16622 may make them spooge in their pants, but to everyone else it's just a train, and probably a late one, too.

So, when last month, we broke the news on *IL-2 Sturmovik* from the Russian team of developers 1C/Maddox Games, I found myself trying to bore the pants off everyone about the game, and the usual reply was "yeah yeah, anyone can make good screen shots". Well four weeks is a long time in politics and, for once, has proved to be a long time in game development. Not long after the usual fare of a screen-shot CD, a press release and promise of better things to come we actually received some playable code. So now not only can I drone on, I can

wave preview code around too. But instead of snores, and rapid exits, people actually stopped, looked and said "that's actually really good". And for the average punter to say that about a flight sim, is like describing Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel as not a bad paint job. Finally, the flight sim has emerged from the Dark Ages.

Sadly this isn't final code, and is only slightly more stable than a break-dancer in a minefield. But it does give us the chance to get a good insight into what it should be. And the only word of choice is 'über'.

The game now has 20 aircraft to fly (including variants) and another 35 other types as AI-controlled aircraft. And the level of detail is nothing short of perfection. The guns, when fired, leave a litter of spent cartridge shells in their wake. And, considering machine guns fire on average 750 rounds per minute, that's a lot of particles on screen. And they're all there, with virtually no loss of frame rate. It's not often you get surprised by a game, but when it happens, it really happens.

Gone too are the old-fashioned background clouds. In *IL2* not only are they modelled to virtual

perfection, but also when you fly into them you get condensation and even rain on your cockpit. It doesn't just look like you're there, you are there. Also the clouds are great places to hide from aggressive enemy fighters, or if you just fancy lurking in safety till some bombers amble along. Radar really ruined the art of sky camping.

CV

Ow, Ow, Ow, Ow, bugger, bugger.

Catch a falling shell and put it in your pocket...

Twin MGS: good against planes, crap against tanks.

↑ Look mum, no swastika.

The planes themselves are intricate; transport planes even have the seats modelled in full 3D, although whether you're going to see terrified faces as you fill the fuselage with 20mm shells remains to be seen. Perhaps that may be taking realism just a little too far. But we live in hope. The land units have also now been added, at least to view on an individual basis, as are the train units. This is probably the only fly in the ointment as the full 'in your face' explosions have yet to be added. But skimming the ground in your Russian tank-busters among Panzers and

how I imagine they would feel." We'll trust his judgement on that one.

The developers still have a lot of work to do on improving the AI – adding rear gunner positions, adding the various naval units, increasing the number of single missions to 24, accurate damage modelling... etcetera, etcetera... You get the idea. It's getting there, but it's not quite there yet. Probably the most impressive claim is with regard to the landscapes. Although we think the cities and landscapes are some of the best ever seen, Oleg Maddox is taking that to an extreme limit,

66 The clouds are modelled to virtual perfection – when you fly into them you get rain on your cockpit 99

Tigers is something no other game has ever managed to do without it feeling like a version of *Scramble* in a Lego canyon. Couple all this with slats, ailerons, rudder movement and dive breaks (if you're not a propeller head then substitute the previous words with 'aeroplane bits') all moving exactly like in a real aeroplane. We even let an Austrian pilot have a quick shot, who described the flight models as "responsive, just

with more than 30,000 city and rural houses on a map. And if you've got the ammo, you can knock 'em down.

But don't think this kind of game will run on a low-spec PC, because it won't. The recommended spec looks set to be around a PIII 600+ with a a top-of-the-range 3D card. *IL-2 Sturmovik* looks like it will be a work of art. We're just waiting for the paint to dry. PCZ

FLYING A PLANE LEGLESS

Say hello to Hans, a rather Nazi piece of work

There were many legends on the Eastern Front, but one of the most famous was a Stuka pilot by the name of Hans Rudel. The Stuka was a lowly single-engine dive bomber, that later in the war was fitted with two 40mm cannons for tank busting, along with a single 500kg bomb. With this outclassed aircraft, (and in the latter part of the war outnumbered), this pilot was the first (and only) pilot to sink a battleship single-handedly (the Russian *October Revolution*). He also sank two cruisers and more than 70 landing craft. On land, he destroyed 532 tanks, 700 trucks and more than 150 artillery pieces. The list just goes on. However, all this didn't come without a cost. He was shot down 32 times, and lost his right leg in the spring of '45 although he continued flying until the end of the war. However, unlike the majority of Germans who were disgusted by the atrocities carried out by Hitler when the facts came out after the war, Hans Rudel was an ardent Nazi until his death in 1982. Weird bloke.

That's some mighty fine guns p'dner.

Don't think this guy's friendly.
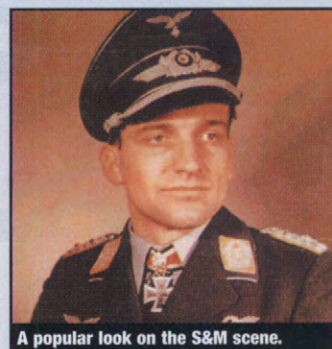
A popular look on the S&M scene.

Ivan Derou

You can see the 'aggro' radius around your enemies. Tread carefully.

If you can't figure out what to do next, you can always just zap the hell out of everything in sight.
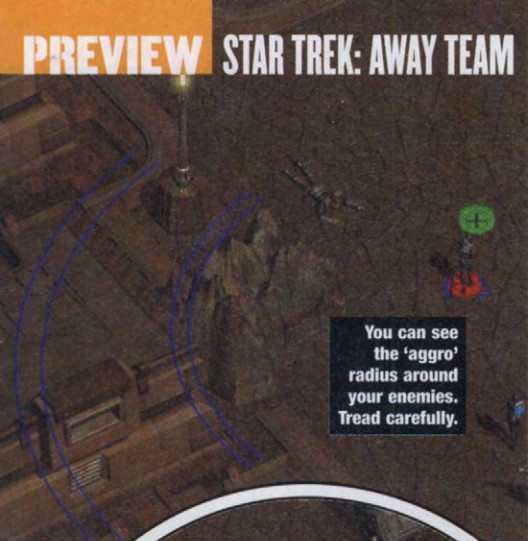
Being a *Star Trek* title, lasers are inevitably involved.

Damage: 40
Range: 375

Standard-issue

The bloke in the red tunic gets it *again* in...

STAR TREK: AWAY TEAM

Star Trek meets **Commandos**? Sounds almost too good to be true, claims *Chris Anderson*

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Reflexive
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.activision.com
OUT April 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It all takes place in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* universe
- Interesting blend of genuine strategy and action
- Many different ways to complete each mission
- *Commandos*-style gameplay can never be a bad thing after all

In hindsight, the marriage of the *Star Trek* licence with the challenging and compelling gameplay of *Commandos* is an obvious thing to do. If the developers working on *Away Team* did nothing more than stick some *Star Trek* sprites on top of the *Commandos* game engine, that in itself would be enough to make the game a sure-fire success. Of course, that would be silly (not to mention illegal), and developer Reflexive is currently working night and day to bring you a real-time strategy game that will be much more than a gratuitous *Star Trek* tie-in.

For those of you who are unconvinced that real-time strategy games involve any great degree of 'real' strategy, *Away Team* will come as a refreshing change. In fact, the strategy begins even before you embark on any of the missions. You have 17 members of your team to choose from, but you can only take a maximum of six players on each mission. This means that careful planning is essential: if you don't take the right people for the job, be prepared to head back to that last saved game and try again. The team members are divided into different disciplines, all of which have been lifted directly from the *Star Trek* universe, and they all have their own strengths and weaknesses. Medical units act as healers and you are advised to bring at least one on every

The action can be paused at any time if you get overwhelmed, or if you're just not very good.

Everything looks suitably spacey and futuristic.

Man trapped in bubble. Call the fire brigade.

Away Team requires more thinking than twonking.

It's 2D, but not as we know it, Captain.

The graphics won't blow your mind, but they are crisp and clear.

mission if you want to keep your team alive. Command units have strong leadership skills and enhance the morale of your characters. Engineers, science units and security officers are also at your disposal, and you are advised to get to know the skills of all your characters very well, because if you lose one of them in battle, it's literally game over.

THE END?

You *must* keep all your members alive during the missions or you will be rewarded with the end game sequence. For this reason, it appears it would be safer to bring less units on a mission rather than more, since it would be easier to keep them together and alive, but we won't know for sure until we get our hands on the game and play it ourselves. But if it's tension you're after, the constant threat of losing the game when one of your characters dies should keep you happy. Added incentive to keep your

REFLEXIVE

Reflexive is comparatively young and has only released one title to date. *Away Team* represents its biggest challenge.

1998 *Swarm*: a hectic shoot 'em up which couldn't be further from the gameplay style of *Away Team* if it tried.

team alive comes in the form of experience points given to your team at the end of every mission. The more experienced your characters are, the better they become at their individual skills, making future missions a tad more manageable.

Weapon and item upgrades are available throughout the game, and you'll find them as you make your way through the missions.

> 66 With *Away Team* you can wade in with all guns blazing, but often a more covert approach will get you to the end of the mission a lot quicker 99

Completing secondary objectives will often lead you to the 'hidden' items sooner, so thorough exploration of each mission area is advised. Most weapon types will be easily recognisable from the *Next Generation* universe. Phasers, tricorders and hyposprays will all be recognisable to Trekkies as standard Starfleet issue, but there are also a large number of weapons created purely for the game.

From the demonstration we were given of *Away Team*, a number of things became very clear. For one, it is not a technological masterpiece. The graphics are admittedly impressive for what is essentially a 2D real-time strategy game, but Reflexive have spent more time working on the actual game mechanics than creating a fully functional 3D universe, and

it shows. However, there's a lot more to this game than you will find in most recent real-time strategy games, which, with few exceptions, amount to nothing more than building an army and wading into the opposition. *Away Team* is a thinking man's RTS, and Reflexive estimates that the 18 missions of the game offer at least 60 hours of solid gameplay.

There is always a worry with games of this type that the gameplay might prove fairly linear, an almost unavoidable knock-on effect in games based around preset objectives, but the demo we were given revealed a variety of approaches to completing missions. How you go about completing each of the objectives will depend greatly on the kind of player you are. You *can* wade in with all guns blazing, but often a more covert approach will get you to the end of the mission a lot quicker.

Clearly, we are impressed. The real-time strategy genre could do with an injection of originality and an emphasis on strategy over action. From what we've seen, *Star Trek: Away Team* stands a good chance of delivering the goods.

TEAM TACTICS

Choose rather than lose

Before each mission begins you will be given a full briefing, telling you what to expect when you leave the ship and head into the action. You will probably be used to skipping through this bit in most games of this type. Don't. The briefing will give you a good idea of which characters you should bring on the mission. If the area is infested with enemies you might want to bring an extra healer for example. Whatever the situation, cock up here and it's game over, so use this opportunity to study the mission area and choose your team members to suit the occasion.

SPECIAL OPS BRIEFING

Oh yes, I'll have him please.

The cameraman cheated death to bring you this dramatic shot.

Now there's a helicopter in the way. What's going on?

And there's a shed. We don't just make this stuff up.

Snow, cable cars, the lot.

Obstacles everywhere. Look, there's a digger.

Drive like that on a public highway and you'd deserve to be called a raving maniac.
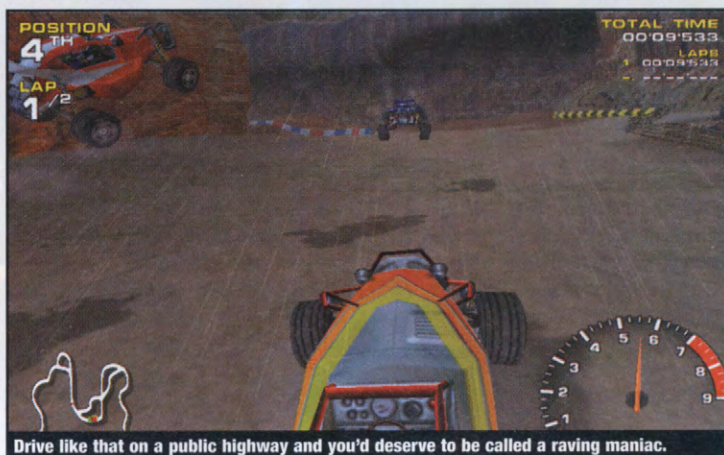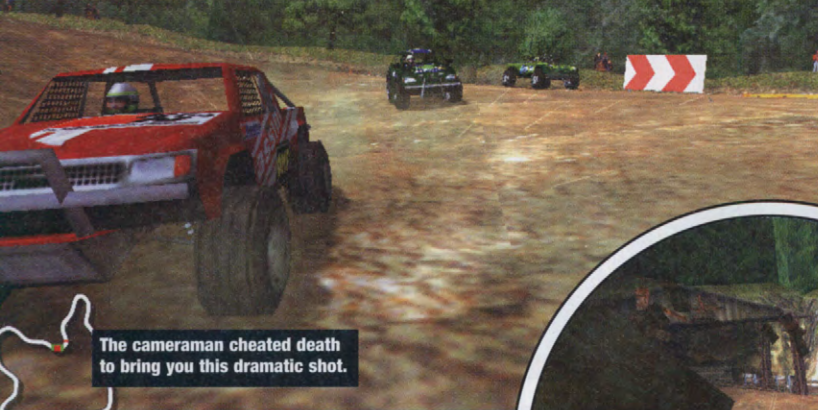
OFFROAD

Steve Hill isn't allowed out on the road, it's pretty easy to see why...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Rage
PUBLISHER Rage
WEBSITE www.rage.co.uk
OUT March

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's offroad
- It's racing
- It's got sheds in it
- And diggers

Driving games continue to spew forth unfettered onto the PC, and the current vogue appears to be for the offroad variety. As all but the most dim-witted will have worked out, *Offroad* falls comfortably into that category, and while it's certainly a functional name, it's hardly the most imaginative. What if everyone took that approach? Would *Doom* have been a benchmark game with the name *Shooting Monsters*? Would *Coronation Street* still be going if it was called *Simple Folk*?

We'll never know. What we do know is that *Offroad* was supposed to be out last summer and has been sliding down the schedules ever since. The fact that pretty pictures of it are emblazoned across this page would suggest that a concrete date is drawing ever nearer, although in the crazy world of games only a fool takes these things for granted. Assuming it does make it onto the shelves some time this year, what will you get for your gaming dollar?

❝ With it's wide-open tracks it could be set to provide some welcome nip and tuck racing, with numerous opportunities for spectacular pile-ups ❞

We'll tell you, shall we? Great big four-wheel drive buggies bouncing around like there's no tomorrow.

The game features six outdoor locations. You've got your canyon, your dried-up riverbed, your tropical affair, and even your docklands, to name but four. Whether against the clock or other drivers, the idea, quite clearly, is to get around in the shortest possible time. Obstacles to this cause are provided in the form of intemperate weather conditions, troublesome terrain, not to mention a few rogue buildings, as the version we played seemed to have a couple of sheds on the track. It also had some diggers in the way, which in a well-ordered society would have been removed for violation of safety procedures.

Clearly, we are in the realms of the arcade game here, and while *Offroad* makes no claims to being a documentary, it is boasting a state-of-the-art physics engine. We're not sure what state the art is in, but if anyone's counting, *Offroad* employs a variation of the engine used for the sublime *Hostile Waters* (see review page 60). It seems to work, and the buggies tear around like buggies do, complete with the requisite lighting effects and all that jazz.

For those who like their games to have objectives, you can start as a shit-kicking no-mark in Division Four of a made-up league, progressing through the ranks towards the ultimate goal of the Drivers' World Championship. And if you're still not happy, you can play it in split-screen mode or with up to five pals on your home network (whadd'ya mean, you don't have one?).

That's pretty much *Offroad* then. If it doesn't sound like we're pissing ourselves in anticipation, it's because we've seen quite a bit of this sort of thing lately. That said, this looks a cut above the rest of the crop, and with its wide-open tracks it could be set to provide some welcome nip and tuck racing, with numerous opportunities for spectacular pile-ups. Fun for all the family. **PCZ**

Hello? What could this possibly be?

Vast hordes of bulls want to graze on my head.

Like dullard boy bands, they just keep on coming.

These things are explosively hilarious. Avoid at all costs.

Trees: download the compatibility test yourself. It's well worth it.

He's not as hard as he looks. Or is he? Yes, actually.
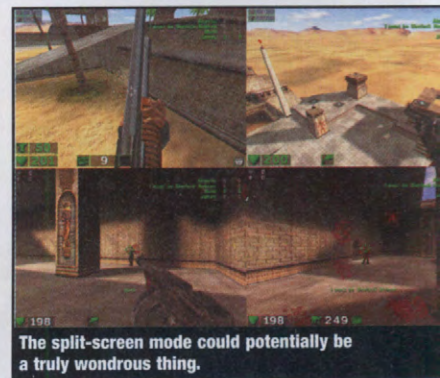
The split-screen mode could potentially be a truly wondrous thing.

SERIOUS SAM

Despite the fact that he wears a stripey jumper, Sam is a very serious chap. His best mate, *James Lyon*, explains…

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Croteam
PUBLISHER Take 2
WEBSITE www.croteam.com
OUT April

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Bare-essentials shooting game
- Doesn't require a brain
- Four-player split-screen mode
- Shipping with its own editor

As much as we all admire this sneaking, leaning and sniping, there comes a time when all we want to do is forget all that and wade in, all guns blazing, to slice and dice, wound, maim and kill as many enemies as we possibly can. As we told you some months ago, *Serious Sam* looks to be the game to recreate the onslaught of a multitude of enemies that made the likes of those early '90s first-person shooters – most importantly *Doom* and *Duke Nukem* – such a name for themselves. And before you can say "Didn't *Kiss: Psycho Circus* do the same?" we'll say that this game oozes all-out bright brass-balls fun. And it doesn't have Kiss in it.

SAM-WHERE, OUT THERE…

Ever since the compatibility test was released on the Internet, *Serious Sam* has been creating a healthy buzz. It somehow feels refreshing to be able to go 'back to basics' as it were in an all-out, mindless, points-mean-prizes, last-man-standing kill-frenzy. It's the multiplayer mode that's garnering the most attention at the moment, aiming as it does towards simplicity. There's no second-weapon functions or

> **❝There comes a time when all you want to do is wade in, guns blazing, to slice and dice, wound, maim and kill❞**

extraneous power-ups; it's just you against everyone else. Take part in a co-operative match and you see everybody facing off to an assault of computer-controlled enemies. It really is something to see, as the mighty battles rage from all directions.

Plus, we have what must surely be the innovation of the year so far: four-player split-screen control. It's a wonder no previous successful PC FPS has done this before now. As a mainstay of consoles for years, it sure beats having to lug about four PCs when four of you can gather round one screen and have a laugh. Sure, only one of you will be able to use the keyboard and mouse, but it's a small price to pay (and it never bothered you in *GoldenEye*, did it?).

Aside from new levels in the updated test, Croteam has also released a few more weapons, most interesting of which is a pirate cannon, which carves a devastatingly linear path through enemy ranks. Though, we've noticed that there's still a couple of numbers keys left untouched, so the inclusion of a BFG weapon is still a possibility.

While the multiplayer side of the game looks to be holding its own at the moment, our main concern just now is the single player. While the action stays at a fast pace, we can't help but feel that the constant waves of attack may become repetitive. The levels we played – which, we should stress, perform their duties adequately – often have a tendency to appear a little bland. Maybe we've been spoiled by the architectural delights of the *Quake III* engine but we're keeping our fingers crossed that Croteam releases the level-polishing hounds in time for the final release.

But let's take a look at the other side of the coin: what we have here is a pure, console-style gib-a-thon. Surely we've no need to be attracted by such ostentatious frivolities when we've got a horde of killer bulls trying to mate with our insides. *Serious Sam* looks like it could be the kind of game essential for a quick lunch-hour blast, in order to gain release from the soulless drudgery of government-sanctioned sweatshops. As well as the obvious aforementioned gaming parallels we might possibly be looking at the next *Robotron* successor as well, as the constant assault harkens back to the adrenalin rush of yesteryear. And if they manage to release it at a rumoured low price, it could be a contender for best-selling Croatian game this year. Well… yes. Obviously. **PCZ**

The trusty old Battlecruiser is still in service.

"Fly me to the moon…"
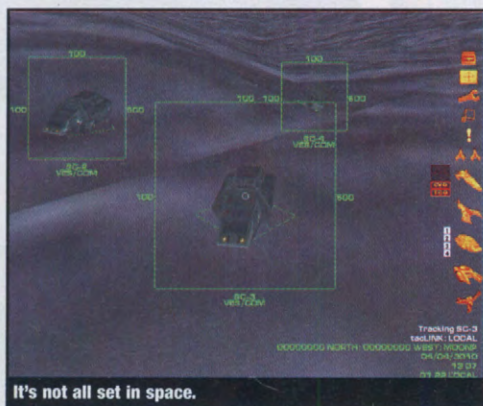
It's not all set in space.

This planet really is quite big.

New ships to command.

Shoulder pads are in again, it seems.

BATTLECRUISER MILLENNIUM

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Space simulation like you've never seen
- Covers every genre but racing
- Massive scale
- Excellent online potential

It takes a big man to captain a starship. Here comes fat bastard *Richie Shoemaker*

L et's not go into the abortive release of the original *Battlecruiser* game. Actually let's a game so bugged we refused to review it when it first arrived. The same game that was fixed by its developers, released free on the Internet, updated again and released on budget. Now, the game is soon to be unleashed totally rebuilt and expanded beyond even the ambitious remit of the original. Actually, ambitious seems the wrong word to use. Grand might be better, certainly in its ideal, but anyway, on with the preview…

Like the old 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, *Battlecruiser* was at its simplest a strategy/action game where you not only commanded your own starship, but the fighters, shuttles and terrain vehicles as well. More than that you had to manage your crew, roam an entirely dynamic and open-ended universe, and engage – if you so wished – in piracy and trade. So for all its action and strategy, *Battlecruiser* was just as much a role-playing game. Not to mention a hardcore simulation of space flight – and by hardcore we mean hardcore: *Battlecruiser* was to *Wing Commander* what *Animal Farm* is to *Emanuelle* – specialist stuff.

Thankfully, though *Millennium* will give players even more to do, we are promised an easier time of it in the new release. The interface has been cleaned up, the graphics are accelerated to the highest of standards, and added to the list of features is a first-person action mode, meaning that you are no longer fixed into the captain's or pilot's chair.

Role-playing has always been an essential part of *Battlecruiser*, but it now seems to have been expanded to *Baldur's Gate* proportions. You can select to play as one of 12 races, choose one of three careers (commander, pilot or marine) as well as a profession within that career (science, military, and so on). And no matter what you choose to be,

> **"The interface has been cleaned up, and the graphics are accelerated to the highest of standards"**

the whole universe around you will carry on regardless, whether you stick to a series of missions or ignore orders and take to the great unknown. The good news for many is that if the space simulation side leaves you white with fear, you can play the game as a foot soldier.

Gameplay aside, *BCM* is no less ambitious in technical terms. We're reliably informed that there are 12 different 3D engines at work, rendering everything from space flight, planetary bodies and terrain with the detailed physics modelling binding it all together. Graphically *BCM* voids itself all over the previous game and though not as 'Hollywood' as some other space combat games, easily eclipses all when it comes to scale and thought.

But as old hands will know, it is going to require patience and hard work – *Battlecruiser Millennium* won't be a game for the faint-hearted. But then who said space was an easy place to be? One thing we can be sure of is that after nearly 15 years of thought and ongoing development, it will be the game its creators have always wanted it to be – hardcore space simulation on an unprecedented scale. Quite frankly, it is this that concerns us more so even than the threat of bugs. PCZ

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PCZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've got to buy and which games to avoid

MISSION STATEMENT

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day, and which ones you should point and laugh at on the shelves. For that reason *PC Zone* works a little differently to any other magazine in the UK.

⭐ Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. We're all massive gamers and we don't mince our words. If there are problems in a game, then we'll tell you about them, even if it means falling foul of certain big names in the industry.

⭐ What's more, we will only review finished games, which means that any bugs we see within the game will be reported back to you. On occasions we are forced to review from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the final boxed product.

⭐ Occasionally this means that we can't review the multiplayer side of the game at the same time as the single-player review, as the servers aren't up and running. When this happens, we won't fudge the issue and claim that 'multiplayer works well', we'll wait until the servers have been running successfully for a month before running a full second review in our Online section.

⭐ We also make sure that we test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In the office we have access to a whole range of different gaming PCs, from a lowly P233 up to the latest 1GHz behemoth. If we spot differences between the minimum specifications and real-life testing then we'll let you know in the review.

⭐ Our scoring system is the most honest in the industry. If a game is average, then we'll give it 50 per cent. If it's not worth knowing then we'll give it the burial it deserves. On the flipside, you won't find many games getting 90 per cent or above, the pre-requisite for our Classic award. Since issue 85 (and the introduction of the new scoring system), we've only given out eight Classics and this proves that a game has got to be pretty special to get the award.

⭐ We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field, which means that each of our reviews can be placed in context with other games of that genre. You won't see a first-person shooter being reviewed by an RTS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the important titles in that particular field.

⭐ Every now and again you might disagree with the treatment we've given a game. That's where our Feedback section comes in. This is where you get to have your say in *PC ZONE*, and where your rumblings are answered by the person who wrote the original review in the magazine.

ALL THE LATEST GAMES REVIEWED & RATED

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315552 • **Eidos Interactive** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450000 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 020 8222 9700 • **Hasbro Interactive** 020 8569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0345 002 000 • **Mattel** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 020 7324 8900 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 020 8944 9000 **Zablac** 01626 332233

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% If a game scores 90 or above it probably means it's quite good. Classics are games that transcend their parts with the sheer quality of the finished product, creating an experience that will leave an indelible mark on your gaming memory. So, not bad then.

Z PCZONE CLASSIC

80-89% In this category you'll find great games that just fall short of being truly exceptional. From slightly-flawed genius to a perfectly-executed traditional concept, these might not be true Classics – but they're still worth having.

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

70-79% These scores are not necessarily a condemnation to gaming hell, in fact, we consider any game that falls into this category as worth checking out. Not Classic or excellent, just very good.

50-69% In this range you'll find games that go from the just-above-average to the alright-really-honest. They're usually good fun but have a limited long-term appeal. Read the review and find out if it's really what you're after before you decide to part with your cash.

20-49% These games just manage to keep their heads above the excrement, although a 20's title is probably pretty damn poor. You can find a game that plays reasonably in this category, but you've been warned.

0-19% Some games are born pants and some have pantness thrust upon them. These games shouldn't have been released. Avoid at all costs.

PCZONE PANTS

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

What's your favourite strategy game and why?

DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Hitman, QIII Jailbreak*

Chess. Because it's true 3D and you can play for shots.

RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING Old Atari ST games

Rebelstar. Because it cost £1.99 and I could afford to buy it.

MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Clive Barker's Undying*

Championship Manager. Read Steve Hill's review.

MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Hostile Waters*

Shogun. Because it's the most realistic war game ever.

SETTLING SCORES

DEPUTY EDITOR Richie Shoemaker

Strategy Special we boldy proclaim on the front cover of this issue and a strategy special it most certainly is. What it doesn't say, however, is how special three of the strategy games reviewed on the next few pages are, something that was evident before finished versions of each arrived in the *PC ZONE* war room. Shamelessly, Martin Korda had been rifling through the post every morning – evidently to get first dibs on *Hostile Waters*. After playing beta code to death, Rhianna's dreams were made real with the final version of *Cossacks* and for myself, I happily managed to sneak in front of the queue to review *Z: Steel Soldiers*.

Everybody was happy. We all went our into our own dark corners to play our games, make extensive notes and write our final summations and when we all came together, so enamoured were we with our games, that we had to take things a stage further and proclaim ours were better than the others.

You'll notice of course that each game has scored well and between the three, only two per cent separates them. To recommend the highest scoring game over the others would be a huge injustice. Though lacking any multiplayer options, *Hostile Waters* is perhaps the best choice if you like an arcade filling in your strategy pie. For the more traditional real-time strategy gamers, *Cossacks* will perhaps be your game of choice. *Z: Steel Soldiers* on the other hand is something of a rogue. While it doesn't have the epic scale of *Cossacks*, nor the hands-on action of *Hostile Waters*, it's positively laced with gameplay and cooked to almost perfection.

Needless to say that after much heated debate and ceaseless nagging from Rhianna (and tears from Martin), we all agreed to disagree as to the best of the three. Of course, being the deputy editor, I can have the final word on such matters and becuse neither Martin nor Rhianna will see these words until you do, I can happily report that *Z: Steel Soldiers* is great and both *Hostile Waters* and *Cossacks: European Wars* smell of poo. Ya-boo sucks to you. Nyah-na, na na na. [Cue raspberry noises and hand flapping...]

A CLASS ACT

Certain games deserve to be elevated above and beyond the mass of titles on the shelves. For that reason we've made it hard for a game to receive our coveted Classic award and a score of 90 per cent and above. Each one will have to show originality, take their respective genres to new heights and represent a major step forward in PC gaming. Given this criteria, it would make us look a bit stupid if we awarded two or three every issue, and over the past 16 months since the introduction of our new scoring system we've only given out eight Classics.

This doesn't mean that anything that scores less should be ignored. Instead it's to point to the games that we can call true masterpieces and benchmark titles. The ones that are going to influence the direction of PC gaming in the near future. And it doesn't stop there. All review scores in our Top 100 are changed over time, to show their standing as and when new titles are released. So, a game that received 90 per cent a year ago, may not still be considered a Classic today. This means that on any given month you can find out exactly what we consider to be the best games in each individual genre.

CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Ultima Online*

X-Com. Because it's the best turn-based strategy game.

STEVE HILL
GENRE Football, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Championship Manager 00/01*

Championship Manager. Read my review.

PAUL PRESLEY
GENRE FPS, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Operation Flashpoint Beta*

Rules Of Engagement 2. Because it's old.

KEITH PULLIN
GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Black & White*

Colonisation. Because it was so instantly involving and easy to play.

JAMES LYON
GENRE Action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING At getting a degree

PC upgrade challenge. As I have to decide what to spend my money on.

ADAM PHILLIPS
GENRE I love all games
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Homeworld Cataclysm*

Sudden Strike, because it's based on real war.

Z: STEEL

★ £29.99 • EON Digital Entertainment • Out April

Z PC ZONE CLASSIC

Having played with plastic soldiers as a child and painted lead ones in his teens, we thought it time *Richie Shoemaker* got his chubby little fingers around some hard steel

They may have invented the wheel back in 1993 with *Dune 2*, but in the last few years Westwood Studios has done little to drive the real-time strategy game forward. Popular, noisy and endearingly familiar, Westwood's latest models have been chuffing along like old VW Beetles – they'll always remain enjoyable to drive, but next to other cars on the road, the likes of *C&C: Tiberian Sun* and *Red Alert 2* have been outdated and outperformed since the day they rolled off the production line.

Not that some of the 3D-accelerated strategy games have been much better. In fact, apart from a handful (notably *Shogun: Total War*, *Homeworld* and *Ground Control*), 2D strategy games are every bit as much fun and certainly more popular than 3D RTS games. 3D games may look the dog's bollocks and run faster than an attached pair from a kebab shop owner, but they are notoriously fiddly beasts to get to grips with, and this hasn't helped their popularity.

features in *Steel Soldiers* that set it apart, but one that makes itself known quite early on is that rather than being one of those 3D strategy games that make more demands on your fingers rather than your brain, *Z: Steel Soldiers* works on your body the other way around. If you can forgive another car-related analogy, *Steel Soldiers* is something of a high-performance machine, perhaps lacking all the little pointless add-ons that come standard with other games, but a real dream to drive, leaving you to keep your eyes firmly on the road ahead.

Firstly, *Steel Soldiers* can be controlled entirely from the mouse. And yes, while all RTS games *can* be controlled this way, you don't usually get very far unless you play finger Twister across the keyboard. For those who prefer more buttons, there are a few physically undemanding keyboard shortcuts, but if your mouse has one of those wheel things, you can quite happily play through the entire game with one hand, leaving the other free to down fizzy pop. And rather than plaster buttons for attacking, building and so on on the screen,

> **The rich spread of strategies arises from a complex and almost human-like intelligence on the part of your opponent**

Enter *Z: Steel Soldiers*. Developed by The 'Oh-yeah-I-remember-them' Bitmap Brothers, *Steel Soldiers* is something of a rarity in these times, as was its 1995 predecessor *Z* (a former *PC ZONE* Classic, by the way). Now there are many

you can right-click any unit to bring up a context-sensitive menu, allowing you to set aggressiveness, build and repair units and perform other specific actions with ease.

Secondly, *Steel Soldiers* has no tutorial. Straight away you are thrown into the action, merciless

SOLDIERS
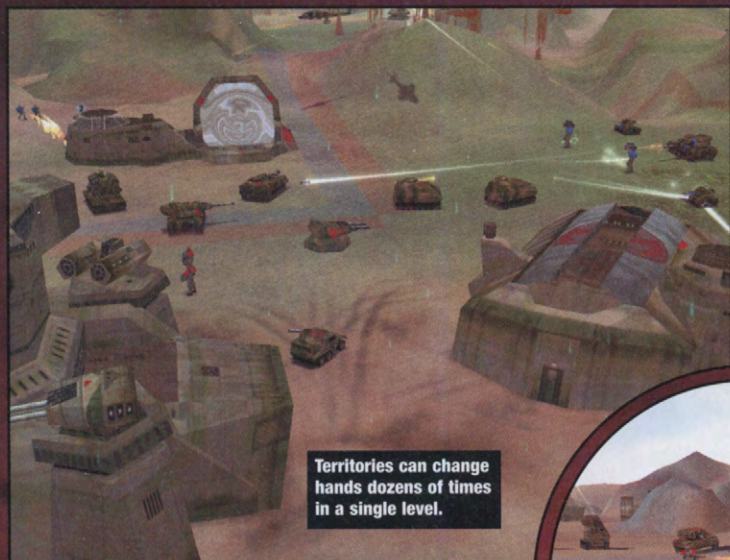
Territories can change hands dozens of times in a single level.

10000 / 10000

Mission six, just before my opponent started whipping me.

There's a real immediacy in everything you do.

Attack is the best form of defence.
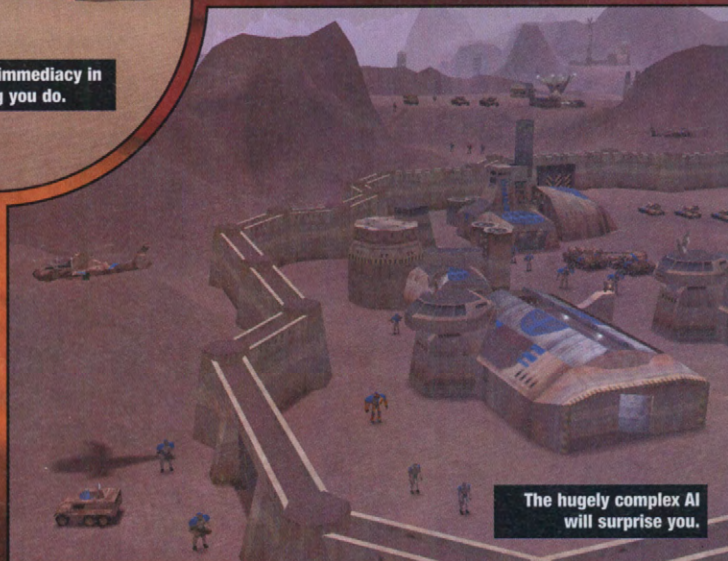
The hugely complex AI will surprise you.

though it may seem; but it's only by flailing at the deep end that you find out how devilishly simple yet incredibly varied the game is. Its rich spread of strategies arises not from a bloated cast list of bizarre machinery, but from a complex and almost human-like intelligence on the part of your opponent – fighting, like you, according to simple rules.

TERRITORIAL PISSINGS

As to the nature of those rules, they too are remarkably simple: capture the flag. Just before some

of you start thinking the idea is go out, find a flapping rag and take it back to your base, the flags in *Steel Soldiers* are more like numbered litter bins – quite nice ones in fact, ones that you would envisage buying in Ikea in 20 years time. You start at one side of the map, usually with a Command Centre and one territory – your blue-tinted enemy on the other, and you must both expand across the level by capturing and holding the litter bin rooted in each territory. If a territory is yours, its boundary will be red, while those

held by your opponent are bordered blue. Simple, see.

Owning territory is central to winning the game, as you can only build on land that's under your control, and unlike other strategy games, land is at a premium. Additionally, rather than having to find deposits of coal, gold, wood or oil and spend hours figuring out how much each of your units costs in each, you simply get an income of credits depending on the amount of the map you currently own. The more land, the faster the dollars stack

up and therefore the more you can build. It isn't even a consideration that a Psycho (bog-standard infantry robot) costs more to build than a Dreadnaught (lumbering battle cruiser), it's more a case of how long each takes to come into service. Time is money, as they say.

Steel Soldiers isn't one of those games in which you can just sit back, watch the credits roll in and hope to win through sheer weight of numbers. In many ways it takes more inspiration from first-person action games like

Quake and *Half-Life* than it does the plodding ideal of *Age Of Empires*.

You have to forge ahead, and even if you control more than half the map, there's a good chance that the enemy will find a weakness somewhere, outflank you and snatch a territory – thereby receiving a substantial cash injection.

EXIT PLANET RUST

Though they may not look it at first, nearly all of the maps have been superbly designed, and even →

the not-so-superb ones are damn good. Tight and self-contained – often with numerous choke-points, they again share a common trait with traditional deathmatch levels in that every inch counts. To build a factory for vehicles, robots or aircraft, you have to make sure that the land is flat, and because you unfortunately can't build steamrollers, more often than not you'll end up with a robot factory on one side of your empire and vehicles being produced at another. Far from feeling constrained or frustrated, this adds another level to the strategy as you rally your forces into the

right mix in order to grab another chunk of land. Or sea.

Offering a hefty 30 levels, five for each of the six planets in the game, at first glance you'd be forgiven for thinking that each

> ## It is clear that each map, unit and mission has been designed to complement one another perfectly

planet is identical, the only difference being the colour. To be honest, I failed to notice any significant differences between the way a tank moved across snow or desert, but the way the maps are designed to bring in

new units and tactics is very clever indeed. For instance, the first five maps, set across a desert world, feature plenty of canyons and steep flat peaks – perfect for pitched infantry

battles. Onto the jungle planet with its mass of trees, and it's time to bring in the choppers to clip the treetops. Later on, as ships start to become available, the water between the land masses opens up. And on the final Mars-like dustbowl, when the most devastating tanks start rolling into service, you find wide open plateaus just waiting to be filled with tracked metal and explosions from distant guns.

It is clear that each map, unit and mission has been designed to complement one another perfectly. For instance, as is traditional in real-time strategy games, units are drip-fed to you level by level. You start off in the first mission only able to build one offensive unit – machine-gunners – which sounds pretty dull until you play it. Geographically small and fairly hilly, it teaches you that in order to win, you must move quickly. In the next mission come jeeps, and although they become obsolete later in the game, for the next couple of levels they are indispensable for scouting ahead. Each map brings out the best in each unit, meaning that almost every mission is played in a different way from the last – all of course at breakneck speed.

SMOKE ON THE WATER
All of which goes to show that *Z: Steel Soldiers* is a game that has to be played to be appreciated. Up until the second I got my hands on it, I feared disappointment. After all, The Bitmaps have been pretty much out of circulation for some time, and to come back with a game to match or even excel past classics such as *Xenon II*, *Speedball* or *Gods* was always going to tricky. Even looking through the screenshots I took while playing the game, few seemed to capture the pure exhilaration I experienced while playing. Looked at as a series of still images, *Steel Soldiers'* maps seem too simple, the land unrealistic and the water flat, but in action it's what's happening

BEANS, BEANS – THEY'RE GOOD FOR YOUR ART...

No FMV and better for it

The *Steel Soldiers* story is conveyed in a manner not unlike the black and white stills of *Homeworld* and the more colourful *MDK 2* – only far more animated and humorous.

At the beginning of each 'act', as your motley band of robot renegades arrive to cause havoc on a new planet, you are treated to a wonderful sequence, almost as if the story had come to life from the pages of *2000AD*.

Unsurprisingly then, we found out that the arty types at Cool Beans, makers of the comic-style sequences for *Steel Soldiers*, have had more than a little to do with the galaxy's greatest comic, as well as having created the artwork that adorned the cover of *PC ZONE* #94 (*Star Trek: Elite Force*). If you've played *Homeworld* or *MDK 2* you will know what to expect, but *Steel Soldiers'* cut-scenes are in a different class entirely – original, funny and certainly worth a repeat showing.

But, being greedy types, we feel you can never have enough of a good thing, and we'd have liked to have seen more. Instead, every mission is introduced with a fly-over of the level using the game's 3D engine, during which the game's characters outline what is to be done. These are fine in themselves, but having to get through five missions to reveal the next part of the story is somewhat cruel. Who knows, maybe one day we'll see a full-length comic movie of Zod and the boys.

Toughs are your rocket-launching robots and are not to be messed with.

Vehicles leave track marks behind them, but they don't stay around for long.

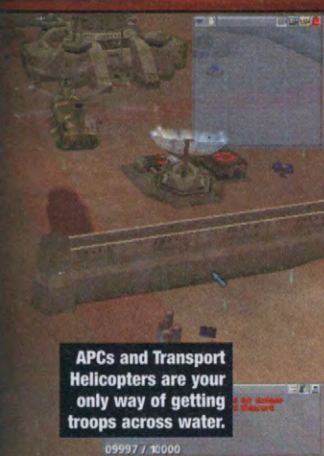## ARE THESE THE DROIDS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?

A taste of the action...

across the maps that takes precedence. Destroy a ship factory and it erupts in spectacular fashion, littering all around with debris, each shard of metal causing neat little ripples in the water. Buildings, tanks and trees too come apart in the most extravagant way, and you can't help but stifle a grin as a lone robot soldier skids to his death under a hail of bullets.

Everything in the game is there for the sake of gameplay: the units distinctive so they are instantly recognisable, the land simple so you can make out what is moving across it, and territorial markings painted on so you can tell at a glance who owns what. Imagine playing football on an unmarked pitch, having to look at a map to judge where the penalty box is and you'll understand why.

"For God's sake they're all over us!" is just one of the many shouts you'll hear as the enemy round in on your position.

PSYCHO PATH FINDING
Although the campaign itself is entirely linear, the missions themselves, though driven by set objectives, are far from it. This is entirely down to the computer AI, which has a human-like quality, and can lay claim to being equal to the stellar standard set by *Half-Life*. Yes it really is that good.

Again this is thanks to the simplicity of the game itself, but because the computer's aims are the same as yours (capture land), the developers have made things rather easy for themselves – not that I'm saying programming intelligence of this calibre is in any way simple.

It wasn't until level six – the first jungle mission – that I noticed just how clever my computer opponent really was. As with all of the missions, both sides start with a certain spread of units to make the best use of, all of which start life in the same place each time. Similarly, after each failure, you get to know where certain units might be and have a better idea of what is going on over the next hill. But there came a point in this particular mission where the computer had had time to expand beyond my ability to

If you can't see the enemy on the map, they're probably jamming your radar.

10000 / 10000

APCs and Transport Helicopters are your only way of getting troops across water.

09997 / 10000

STEEL WORKERS

There are more than 30 units available in *Steel Soldiers* and both sides have access to the same technology, so you'd best find out what everything does

ROBOTS
These are *Z*'s real *Steel Soldiers*, the only units in the game that can capture territory for you. Psychos are your standard machine-gun toting troops, while Pyros can launch deadly napalm. Best of all are Toughs with their slow-firing rockets that can take out tanks, aircraft and buildings. Other robot units include far-sighted Snipers (who can pick off drivers, leaving you to nick their motionless vehicles), Technicians and the all-important Construction Robots.

BUILDINGS
Lose your Command Centre, the only building that can create Construction Robots, and it's all over. They are the units capable of building robot and vehicle factories, air hangars, stores (for increasing your maximum credit limit), research facilities, bunkers, turrets, walls and radar stations, as well as high level buildings like the Environmental Control Centre and shield generator.

GROUND UNITS
Light, Medium and Heavy Tanks, Jeeps, Mobile Missile Launchers – all these are what you'd expect in a real-time strategy game. APCs, however, can traverse across water, and later on you can build Mortar, Disruptor and Shockwave Tanks – all of which are pretty damned deadly.

AIR UNITS
Fast but ultimately pathetic, Scout Helicopters become available in the second set of missions. It isn't until you can build Assault Choppers, however, that some serious death starts to rain from above. These units need to be rearmed at an air hangar, so for round-the-clock bombing, have a few in reserve. Other air units include Transport Helicopters, Stealth Bombers and Fighters.

SEA UNITS
Fast and handy for taking out ground units close to the shore, Gunboats are your first seaborne units. Later on Missile Boats, Destroyers and the massive Dreadnaughts become available, all of which can bombard targets at great distance. The Cruiser is the only sea unit that can plant and clear mines.

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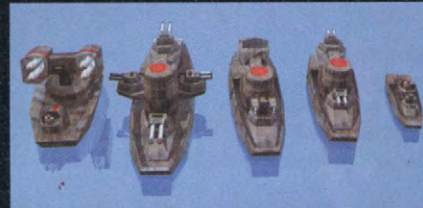
1 It's the first mission, and those incompetent droids are lost in enemy territory, territory that must be taken.

2 Another territory is under your control and with it a nearby robot factory, saving you the effort of building one.

3 Brad isn't far away but you have to escort him back to base before the enemy finds you.

4 Zooming out you see the Blues complete their Robot Factory – best get a move on.

5 Brad makes it back to base, but there's still one more to find and the enemy forces are building up.

A seriously good game that doesn't take itself too seriously.

Big explosions, debris and beautiful reflections – shame there's little time to appreciate it all.

Your units adopt a suitable uniform to fit in with their surroundings on each world.

It's all about supreme playability.

It's raining – burning chunks of metal.

Shockwave Tanks. Nasty.

predict the location of its forces. On seeing the only way forward was through a ravine, guarded quite lightly by a couple of tanks, I took the rash decision to attack. In fact, I got a little bit carried away and took two territories, and although this gave a short-term boost to my wallet, it left my forces too spread out and within a couple of minutes, both regions were lost.

But it was close. The enemy only got a light tank and two

robots through, one of which was an unarmed construction robot. So, thought I, a couple of tanks and a half-dozen Psychos should take care of them. All of these were cut to pieces before they reached the first marker. The bastard Blue general had used his builder bot to construct a chain of Gun Towers. Had I sent a Scout Helicopter in I might have seen the danger, even though that wouldn't have survived either.

So, in the name of research, I started the level again to see if the same would happen. Of course, with each restart, while my knowledge of the level only grows, the opposing general has to endure something approaching a lobotomy, and while he's pretty predictable at the start of each mission, he certainly learns fast. In this instance I was buggered to find that instead of going all defensive, the sneaky tart simply overran me.

The AI isn't all good, however. Later on I found that the enemy doesn't use high-level units and structures nearly as much as it could. Technicians (who can take over buildings), Spies, Shockwave Tanks, Stealth Bombers and Environment Control Buildings (these send meteorites across the map – neat), were rarely put to use. However, having figured out that a few dozen Tanks and Attack Choppers were enough to spit-roast me, maybe the AI didn't

need advanced units as much as I obviously did. One thing is for sure, though – the AI puts up a damn good fight. Bloody good at using APCs and transport helicopters too, I'll give him that.

WHAT'S THE STORY

Ah yes, nearly forgot, the story… Actually the story isn't that important, but it is rather good. More important is the way the story is told (see panel). But for those itching to know what

REAL STEEL SOLDIERS

The campaign should keep you going for a while, but when that's over, you can always play against others

Of course we've yet to test *Steel Soldiers* online (that can wait for another day), but we've certainly played the game across a LAN and against real people, and *Steel Soldiers* is every bit as fast and frantic as the single-player campaign, in fact probably more so.
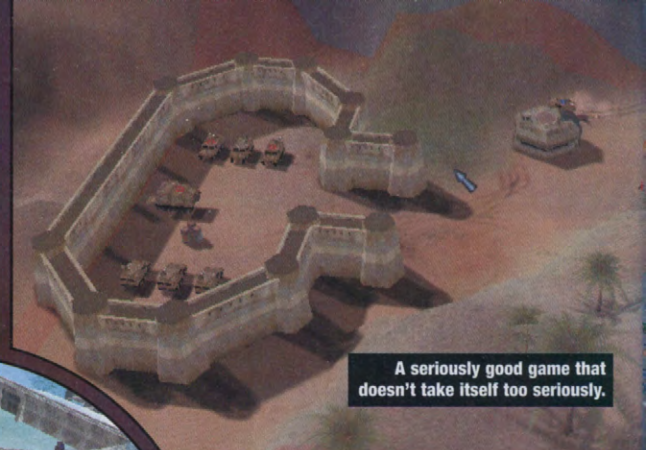
Obviously the units available are exactly the same as those in the single-player campaign, but what is completely different is how many players can join in. Unlike the missions, where two sides are fighting across the map, in the multiplayer game or indeed the single-player Skirmish mode, up to eight players can fight together or team up.

There are in fact 20 maps available; ten for

one-on-one games, a couple each for three, four and eight players and one map each for the rest. Before the game you can set credit limits, tech levels and team settings, throw in power-ups and turn off the fog-of-war. There are also more multiplayer modes than *Unreal Tournament*, with variations on the deathmatch theme, Hero games where you must keep one character alive, a Theft mode where each must find and hold a special item and the king-of-the-hill style Key Territory game. Quite a few options then, and thanks to the game's pace, multiplayer games can be played in a lunch hour, which means we could be seeing the end of *Counter-Strike* at last. Well, maybe not.

Did we mention that this game is addictive? Well it is.

Your enemy will attack in force – you don't see that in too many RTS games.

happened to General Zod and his bumbling sidekicks Brad and Alan after the original *Z*, here goes…

Well, the General is no longer. No longer a general anyway. In *Steel Soldiers* the cigar-chewing machine has been demoted to a lowly captain and posted to patrol some dusty backwater planet in the middle of nowhere. An uneasy truce exists between the two sides and thanks to Brad and Alan, that peace is shattered when they decide to shoot down a supposed troop ship landing in the demilitarised zone. Zod and his men are deemed renegades, and more through necessity than desire, they must fight to clear their names.

To uncover the story, missions must, of course, be completed and there is a healthy range of mission objectives, from rescuing lost units (usually Brad, Allen, or

> ❝**It might not be giant leap for games in general, but it is a victory for gameplay – a welcome return to old values**❞

both), escorting Zod, finding lost items, destroying enemy factories or all out annihilation of the enemy. The mission objectives in themselves are nothing we haven't seen or done before in

countless games, but to be fair the same is true in almost all genres. In RPGs we must find some sacred relic, in shooters it is a door that needs opening or innards that need airing, so to expect to have to do something other than blowing up the enemy is perhaps a little hopeful.

HOLE PUNCH

For all the cutting back of the fat, *Steel Soldiers* isn't without a few love handles. The on-screen interface is a little fiddly. The button you have to click to remind yourself of mission objectives, scores, find units and so on is a little on the small side. Though to be fair these only require some practise to get used to. I also found that there are perhaps too many buttons on screen, and some I never had cause to use at all. Thankfully, since you are free to move them around, they rarely obscure the action.

The way in which the story unfolds is also a little odd. For the superb and original way it is carried along, the animated comic

look is at odds with the slick 3D game graphics. I would certainly have liked to see more of the Cool Beans artwork to go with the excellent voice-overs and one-liners and I fear that before a sequel appears, the idea will have been copied and done to death.

I had to think long and hard before deciding to give *Steel Soldiers* a *PC ZONE* Classic Award, and I have to say that while not to everyone's taste, it is certainly a work of art. For all the subtle varieties in gameplay and the high degree of thought that has evidently gone into the game, it doesn't so much push the boundaries forward as punch a hole in them, one through which other games are unlikely to follow. Not the game's fault of course, but as a strategy title it will certainly be too action-orientated for some. Perhaps if some of the missions saw you taking on the role of defender rather than attacker there would be even greater variety and more satisfying balance.

These are small gripes however, and entirely subjective ones at that. The simple fact is *Z: Steel Soldiers* is a truly excellent game, far superior to it's predecessor and easily up to the high standard The Bitmap

Brothers have set themselves in the past. It will provide new challenges to seasoned wargamers, and for those bored into submission after countless *C&C* clones, I can guarantee this game will re-ignite your passion for strategy games. If *Command & Conquer* was strategy's answer to *Doom*, *Steel Soldiers* is its answer to *Quake*. Fast, frenetic and polished to near-perfection, its beauty lies in its simplicity and accessibility

INPERSPECTIVE

Although heavy on plot and offering a little more in the way of strategic planning, we have to admit preferring the pace and sledgehammer wit of *Z: Steel Soldiers* to Sierra's *Ground Control*. If you want heavy resource management go for *Earth 2150*, and if you want to be disappointed, *Dark Reign 2* is the game for you. *Z: Steel Soldiers* it is then.

Ground Control	
Z: Steel Soldiers	
Earth 2150	
Dark Reign 2	

rather that the shine of its graphics – just the way a great game should be. It is quite amazing how such a slight twist in emphasis can change the whole focus of a game. It might not be a giant leap for games in general, but it is certainly a victory for gameplay – a very welcome return to old values from one of Britain's most respected and loved developers. I only hope we don't have to wait four years for their next game. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII-266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES Blah** 8Mb Direct X 3D card **WE SAY** Flies on anything from a PIII-500, 128Mb upwards

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Fast and a lot of fun • Simple ideas superbly executed • Clever map design • Superlative AI • Fantastic use of ambient sounds

⬇ **DOWNERS** Too much emphasis on attack • Too fast-paced for some • No real resource management

90 Strategy has rarely been this much fun

Your town centre is the first thing to build.

The Ukrainian derby was getting out of hand.

Leaving the gates open doesn't do anything for your health.

Towers are effective, but easily destroyed.

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

⭐ £34.99 • CDV • Out End of March

It's anti-trust time for the historical RTS… *Rhianna Pratchett*
reckons *Cossacks* **has a musket aimed right at Microsoft's head**

When you start playing *Cossacks – European Wars* for the first time it feels like someone has taken the stabilisers off your bike. You felt so safe and secure with *Age Of Empires/Age Of Kings/Warcraft* and now some bastard has let go of your seat and left you flailing wildly down an unfamiliar RTS road. Where's the berry bush?

↑ *Cossacks* will blow RTS fans away.

Where are the little sheep? Why are all these men running at me with pointy sticks before I've managed to build a stable. But with the help of an enormous tutorial and a few practice campaigns, you'll soon be dishing out Renaissance-style carnage, because this is what strategy fans were born to do. This is *Cossacks* ladies and gentlemen. This is the best thing to come out of the Ukraine since Andrei Shevchenko. This *is* war.

In case you've been asleep for the last six months, *Cossacks* is a massive RTS set between the 16th and 18th centuries, which includes 16 nations, 85 real-life battle scenarios, 300 possible upgrades and the potential creation of 8,000 units, all on a fully 3D landscape. Battles are

"The landscape is fully 3D and combines with real physics to make units move slower when climbing hills and so on"

available in both single and multiplayer modes, and the game also includes four long campaigns and a number of single scenarios, which make for an excellent training ground. It's been hailed as an *Age Of Empires 3* (although *Cossacks* has distinct differences from the *AOE* franchise), as it picks up the timeline of historical strategy games where *Age Of Kings* left off.

The game's bold claims of "8,000 units with no loss of speed" definitely lives up to the hype. Although it's unlikely you'll ever need to create that many units, it's reassuring to know you can. On a 600MHz machine it runs like a dream, no matter how many units you create and even on a 300MHz there's very little lag. This boast also means that you can control not only large troop formations as in *Shogun*, but command every single unit uniquely. The units you can create

fall into four basic categories: infantry, cavalry, artillery and navy, with many nations having their own unique units such as the Ukrainian's Sich Cossacks cavalry and the French Chasseur infantry. I was sure the latter was something you did with chicken. The individual unit orientation is also very smooth, especially the ships, which cut through the water with the elegance of giant wooden swans.

The graphics are one of the most impressive aspects of the

IN PERSPECTIVE

Nudges over *Age Of Kings* and *Shogun* in both depth and detail. Although it has its faults, *Cossacks* is the most absorbing, best value strategy game available. No RTS fan should miss this.

Shogun: Total War

Cossacks

Age Of Kings

Age Of Empires

game. Each nation has it's own architecture, which seems to be loosely based on an American tourist's vision of what a country's typical buildings should look like. Hence England's buildings all look like they've come straight out of Westminster and all that's missing from the Austrian ones is a miniature Maria Von Trapp. Nevertheless they are exquisite to look at, from their initial construction – which is painstakingly reproduced almost brick by brick – to their eventual destruction. There's no doubt that graphically *Cossacks* makes *Age Of Kings* look like a Disney film.

The game is essentially 2D, without the benefit or perhaps the hassle (depending on your view) of the varied camera angles of something like *Shogun*. However, the landscape is fully 3D and combines with real physics to make units move slower when climbing hills, shoot further from points of elevation, and so on. The damage potential of your units is also governed by height, angle and terrain. This actually has the potential to turn you into a much better RTS player, as you have to think more realistically and have a physical map in your head as well as a by-the-numbers military one. Using the terrain to your advantage can allow a small force to cause extensive damage to a much greater one if they can secure the strategically important areas. After a few games, especially the longer scenarios, it can really feel like you've done a hard days commanding.

Resource management also plays a big part in waging a successful war. Your economy is based on six basic resources: food, which is harvested from the fields around your mill, coal, iron and gold, which all must be mined, and wood and stone which are gathered from nearby woodlands and stone pits. Not only will you need resources to create your units, you'll also need resources to maintain them, a realistic element fundamentally lacking in most previous RTSs. You'll need to keep up a regular supply of food to satisfy your troops' stomachs, gold to line their pockets and prevent mutiny, and a regular supply of coal and iron for the manufacture of munitions.

The gathering of resources is fairly quick and simple once you've located the relevant sources, and goods can also be bought and sold in the market. However, while the AI of your military units is relatively good, the AI of your peasants, the backbone of your economy, is sadly not quite up to that of *Shogun* or *The Conquerors*' 'intelligent' units. One of their most frustrating aspects, aside from their tendency to throw themselves kamikaze-style at your enemies, is that they won't automatically harvest freshly grown corn, even if you've remembered to replant it and it's waving merrily right under their noses. It's an easy problem to address with a few mouse clicks, but in the middle of a frantic battle it's not particularly productive to have your units dropping dead on their feet from famine.

A dozen Serdiuks against 200 artillery men. No problem eh, lads? ...lads?

The sea battles are gloriously detailed.

Well-disciplined bunch, for a horde of ruthless barbarians.

A man and his horse. And a long, pointy stick.

There are a few elements of the game that can seem annoying at first, such as the time it takes to make some of the units, which varies from about four seconds for a pike-man to more than three minutes for a cannon. That is until you see how much damage a cannonball can do and you realise just how glad you are that the enemy can't make them any

As far as sound goes, the special effects are second to none. You don't know warfare until you've watched a few of the vast demo battles included with the game and heard the sound of cannon fire ringing in your ears. The music accompanying the game can best be described as 'of the period', so if you like a bit of Austrian chamber music

won't have become tired of waiting and buggered off to *The Conquerors*, because *Cossacks* is simply too good to be left to fall by the wayside.

> **66** *Cossacks* is ensured a big future as a multiplayer favourite, and online battles have already been known to last for days **99**
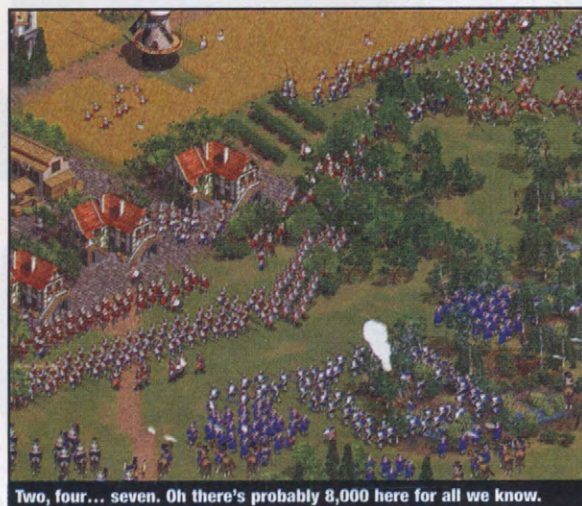
faster either. Buildings and peasants can also be destroyed, captured and recaptured very easily which makes for great guerrilla warfare. These kinds of dynamics ensure *Cossacks* a big future as a multiplayer favourite, and online test battles have already been known to last for days.

then you'll be in your element. If that's a bit *too* authentic for you, you're better off with just the gentle sounds of warfare.

The demo of *Cossacks* has been knocking around for about six months now, and this has unfortunately stolen some of the thunder of the full game. Hopefully its target audience

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor Pentium 200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 1Mb video card **WE SAY** Pentium 450, 64Mb RAM, 4Mb video card

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Beautifully detailed graphics • Engaging, realistic battles • 3D landscape • Smooth unit and ship movement • Historical accuracy

⬇ **DOWNERS** Variable AI • Not for beginners

89 An epic

Capture the higher ground and you can dispense death from above.

Two, four... seven. Oh there's probably 8,000 here for all we know.

This is no time for rambling.

Keep in with the locals.

OLDE WORLD ORDER

There are a whopping 16 nations to lead to victory in *Cossacks*, from good old Blighty to the Ukraine (I wonder why they put that in...). Each has its own style of architecture and a unique set of military units under their command, based on the actual forces that existed at the time. Here are just a few of them to whet your appetite

Austria
Took an active part in the 30 Years War and allied with England. Roundshiers and Pandurs were the mainstay of their army, backed up by the feared Cuirassier.

Ukraine
Ukraine's battle for independence from Poland is one of the main scenarios in the game. Cossacks, both the Serdiuk soldiers and the mounted Sichs, were the pride of the Ukrainian army.

Turkey
Under the rule of Osman the Emperor, Turkish troops made up part of a formidable army which conquered large areas including Crimea and Egypt and even besieged Vienna.

Poland
The Winged Hussar horsemen made up the core of the Polish army, so named for their feather-decorated back armour, used to protect from sabre swings.

Spain
Became one of the greatest colonial states after the discovery of America. Their seafaring aspirations were seriously dampened by British pirates who plundered their coastal towns.

England
A formidable military and naval power at the time, England's forces included the powerful Grenadiers, Hussar and Dragoon cavalry and the might of the howitzers and multi-barrel cannons.

Bye, bye, fluffy little white sheep...
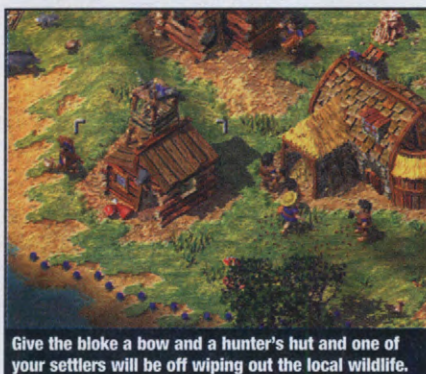
Give the bloke a bow and a hunter's hut and one of your settlers will be off wiping out the local wildlife.

At closing time the settlers all hang out in the pub car park. Or around the iron smelter...

THE SETTLERS IV

★ £34.99 • Ubi Soft/Blue Byte • Out now

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Andrew Wright finally settles down and takes a look at the latest in this empire-building-cum-strategy game series

Let's face it, if a game gets as far as a fourth incarnation, it must have something going for it. The cute cartoon-style *Settlers* series might not be everyone's cuppa, particularly when you go up against epic-looking titles like *Cossack*. But as always there's only one thing that really counts and that's gameplay.

As you'd expect, *S4* is an empire-building game with its accent being on creating a sound economy from which to wage war on your opponents. In fact, it's perfectly possible to play without lifting a sword in anger, even against other humans, thanks to the free-settling mode in which the winner is the one with the biggest and best settlement at the end of the game.

To do this, you have to gather raw materials from the surrounding area, occupy land to provide space for your buildings and organise a complicated series of production chains to turn things like wood, stone and iron

ore into tools, weapons and eventually war machines and ships. Unlike in *Age Of Empires* and its clones, you don't give your individual settlers instructions to 'chop wood' or 'mine stone' – you simply put up the relevant building and watch them do whatever is necessary to get them producing.

There's an incredible amount to do in *S4*, with a total of 32 raw materials, goods, tools and weapons to micro-manage, some 48 buildings types to think about, 36 settler types, eight warrior types, nine ships and vehicles and 11 different tools and weapons.

BOOZE

Wood and stone are the primary building materials, although you'll quickly need to mine coal, iron, gold and sulphur to build the best stuff. You can also build grain farms, waterworkers' huts and mills to create bread, manage pigs or sheep from the farm to the slaughterhouse to feed your miners, and grow vines to create

alcohol to curry favour with your gods. Eventually you'll have to build storage sites because production stops quickly if the goods aren't carried away from the place of production. Only miners actually consume food but you need the right foodstuffs to get them working at full tilt.

With 36 different occupations for each settler, it's up to you to ensure the right balance. You specify the exact number of the three basic occupations: builder, digger and carrier. More builders and diggers makes construction faster, while the efficient flow of raw materials and goods around the settlement depends on carriers.

There are 28 other occupations in the game, most of which are automatically created when the relevant building is put up. Build a slaughterhouse, for example, and a spare settler who's not a builder, carrier or

Looks like we'd better build a job centre next.

digger will pick up an axe (if you've got one, of course) and get to work. Carriers take animals to the slaughterhouse and the butcher stacks the meat outside for more carriers to pick up and take to wherever they're needed most.

When materials are scarce, you can alter the relative importance and priority of individual goods and even prioritise production. Knocking down your own buildings to free up resources is also more tactically important than in other games of its type.

In contrast to *Civilization* clones there's no such thing as automatic production in this game and it does make you think. Hard. In fact, it's perfectly possible to stall a settlement completely simply for the lack of one tool or a bag of ore – at least it is if you've set the priorities badly. It can be frustrating in the extreme to watch six bags of coal sit on the ground right next to the building that you desperately need to turn

squad leaders boosts morale, or you can pump them up with war machines such as catapults and warships or add specialist military units unique to each race.

New to the series is the fact that your military might is tied closely to your economic power. You can have more soldiers than your rival but if he's ahead in production, his men will fight that much harder. 'Eyecatchers' are another factor – build statues and

donkey carts for creating new colonies, multiplayer trade, and a superb seamless zoom option. With a half-decent graphics card you can play at resolutions up to 1,280x1,024 and still zoom in until one building fills the screen. *S4* makes the most of 'kick ass' cards with filtering and texture support.

Multiplayer gamers also now have more options, either across a LAN or on the Net on the free Blue Byte Game Channel, but the small number of single and multiplayer maps is disappointing. Although the opening screens have a slot of 'custom' maps, there's nothing in the manual and no map editor.

Once your geologists have found ore, it's time to build a mine.

> ## It's a tremendously challenging game with weeks of varied gameplay behind it

out a scythe for example. To get a metal ingot with which to create the tool, you need to get your miners to work, but they won't if they don't get some bread. And they won't get bread until you farm the grain – with that bloody scythe that you haven't got…

GOD-BOTHERERS
You also control five specialists – geologists to look for mineral resources, pioneers to expand your boundaries, priests to cast spells and ask the gods for help, gardeners to counter the Dark Tribe's doings and thieves to pinch other players' resources and to scout around. Plus soldiers to recruit – swordsmen, archers and medics as well as unique units for each race.

Settlements in *S4* have a fixed boundary, and to expand you'll need to either create pioneers who will slowly push the borders back, or build towers and castles. To ensure you have enough manpower, you'll eventually need to build small, medium or large residences to hold more settlers. In military terms, soldiers can be created at first, second or third level of capability, but they can't be promoted, so making the right initial choice is essential. Adding

ornaments in your settlement and your men will do better. Priests are another fascinating settler type, useful for casting offensive spells and beneficial ones, like shortcuts, which open paths through previously impassable terrain.

Along with the direct link between military capabilities and the economy, there are three races: Romans, Mayans and Vikings, each with their own features, building costs and weapons. There's also a new enemy, the Dark Tribe, that bring in different game strategies as they ruin all the land they settle.

WHAT YOU SEE…
In *Age Of Empires* and *Civ*-type games, you move through several eras, gaining new units and buildings, but that's never been part of the *Settlers* ethos. The buildings you create at the start could be with you at the end as there are no upgrades, weapon improvements and the like, which might surprise some of you.

You can change many special units back into carriers, recruit the new gardener unit to repair land ruined by the Dark Tribe, add hunters to collect meat, and recruit saboteurs in multiplayer games. Other additions include

That said, though, *S4* is a tremendously challenging game with weeks of varied gameplay behind it. I'd like to have seen a less cluttered, more predictable landscape but the in-game menus, the excellent keyboard shortcuts and the incredible depth make this a hot contender for the strategy game crown. **PCZ**

Ships come in three flavours – ferries, warships and traders.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 **Memory** 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 800x600 graphics card **WE SAY** About right, power-wise, but a half decent 3D card is essential

PCZ VERDICT

🔺 **UPPERS** As addictive as ever • Superb seamless zoom • Well-designed interface and controls • In-depth economics • Choice of three playable races • Multiplayer support • Detailed animations

🔻 **DOWNERS** Not enough maps • No map editor • No unit, tool or weapon upgrades

83 Well, that's settled then…

Keeping track of the 37 basic goods and raw materials can be a challenge.
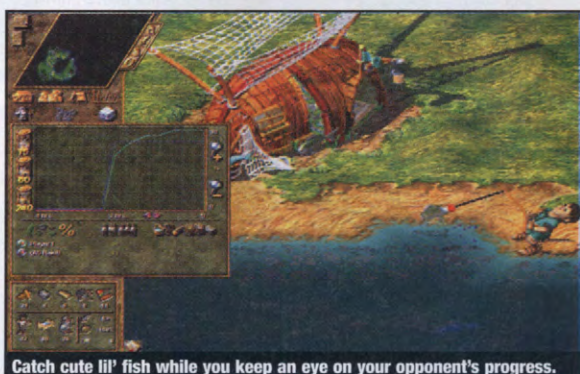
Catch cute lil' fish while you keep an eye on your opponent's progress.

🔾 WALKTHROUGH   END

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

All you need to get settled…

1 In most scenarios you start with a reasonable number of settlers and some precious resources. First task is to build a woodcutter's hut. Click on the appropriate building from the five building menus and place a hut close to the forest. The dots show you where it is possible to build with the green dots showing flatter ground for faster construction.

2 To process the logs you need a sawmill. If you want to keep the forest regenerating, you'll also need a forester's hut. Both should be as close as possible to each other to cut down on transport. If you want the woods cleared for building, leave the forester's hut for now.

3 Unlike the wood, the stone supply is limited. A stonecutter's hut is capable of turning rocks into stones and it creates more free land at the same time. Remember that you don't need to assign settlers to individual tasks. If there's a spare one, he'll take up the post happily.

4 To get food, you start with grain. Build a grain farm and a farmer will start working the surrounding fields. The grain is taken by carriers to the nearby grain mill and from there to the bakery, where it is mixed with water from the waterworker's hut to get bread. To obtain meat, you need a ranch, which takes more water and grain from the farm to raise the animals.

Hostile waters can get explosive if it goes untreated.

Strategic options are many, but blowing things up will always be a favourite.

What's Anne Widdecombe doing here?

HOSTILE WATERS

⊕ £34.99 • Rage • Out now

Martin Korda had hostile waters once. But that's another story altogether

It's not often that a game impresses me. In fact it's so rare, I could count on one digit the number of games that have excited me this year – until now. That's because what we have here is an action/strategy game verging on brilliance. So good, that it not only makes me wet with excitement, but drenches most of the opposition by pissing all over it.

Set in a not too distant Utopian future, *Hostile Water*s sees world unity and peace threatened by several well armed would-be dictators. Having done away with weapons long ago, the world's governing bodies have something of a problem – they've got nothing but a few pointed sticks and some nasty looking rocks to throw at these guys. That is until the top secret Anteus project is resurrected – a fully automated ship requiring just one human to control it – you. And if you couldn't have guessed, there's only one of these things left.

TOTAL IMMERSION

The beauty of *Hostile Waters* is that you can play it purely as a strategy game if you want to. On the other hand you can also get every bit as involved as the units you command, by jumping into a vehicle and taking part yourself. After just a couple of hours you're completely captivated, pulled into the screen through a subtle blend of thought and reflex, unknowingly contorting your face into a hateful sneer as you execute a succession of enemies. Then in stark contrast you're ripped back to normality by a cut-scene of touching brilliance, showing you how the paper-frail divide between an idyllic peace and a bloody war could be crossed by your merest failing.

It's not long before you're drawn in so much that you start to actually care. Even though the narrative often verges on corny over-sentimentality, you can never help but feel important. In

66A perfect blend of strategic planning and manic action with a thrilling storyline 99

Hostile Waters you're not a nameless rookie on a ship's roster, trying to make a name for yourself; you're the elite, the one person who can reverse the imminent tide of destruction that threatens humanity. It's the fact that you believe it that makes the game so bloody good.

BY HAND OR COMMAND

At the start of each mission, you have to build up an attack force. Each unit can be customised to your liking, which adds a huge amount of diversity to your tactical choices. Augmentations range from extra armour to cloaking devices and machine guns. It's totally up to you whether you spend all your resources on two or three ultra-hard vehicles or seven or eight wimpy ones. And because you're not confined to a predefined set of units, there's literally no limit to what tactics you can employ.

Rather than being piloted by humans, every vehicle must be fitted with a Soul Catcher chip, an ex-army ace's brain stored on silicon. Each one has their own area of expertise, ranging from flying transport ships to piloting attack choppers. Once you have a sizeable team together, the authenticity of the whole thing is exhilarating. Team members act intelligently and autonomously whenever danger arises, talking to each other in typically bravado-

If in doubt, hide behind a tank.

laden terms, with gratuitous swearing to boot. Tanks and aircraft attack in waves, and your units use evasive manoeuvres and teamwork to dispose of them. Just watching the battles is worth the entry fee alone.

I'M IN CONTROL

Rather than falling into the trap of over-complicating the command interface, Rage has included a completely separate screen from which to issue orders, pausing the game and allowing you to think over your next move. Once you've done this, you simply jump back into the action and watch the whole thing unfold.

However, the most incredible way to experience *Hostile Waters* is by getting involved yourself. Man an aircraft and take to the sky, gunning down bogeys in

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you prefer your games to be slightly more mythical, then *Giants* is about as close as you can get to an alternative, and what's more it has some great multiplayer options. If you like the look of *HW*, but don't fancy getting your mitts dirty, then *Ground Control* is your best strategy-only alternative.

Hostile Waters
_____

Giants
_____

Ground Control
_____

tandem with your hugely intelligent computer-controlled units. During the heat of a battle, there are few other games that equal *Hostile Water*'s atmosphere and authenticity, its thrilling, adrenalin-pounding action and excitement. And there are so many different ways to tackle each mission.

You can approach a level by building a squadron of helicopters, assigning them as your wingmen and navigating round a beautifully rendered coastline in perfect formation to flank the enemy, or just use a frontal assault of ground units, backed by air support. Both ways will provide you with a completely different experience and set of obstacles to overcome, showing just how freeform and intuitive *Hostile Waters* is. And with a limit on the amount of units you can build, massing troops and charging the enemy base à la *Command & Conquer* thankfully isn't an option. Add to this a captivating storyline written by veteran comic writer Warren Ellis, with more twists than a portion of curly fries, and you're left with one of the finest games, not only of the year (so far), but in the history of action/strategy gaming.

CLOSE BUT NO CLASSIC

But that's not to say it's not without faults, which is why I said it was verging on brilliance, rather than saying it *is* brilliant. Firstly, it takes way too long to get your hands on some of the more impressive units and weaponry, which can make the first few missions annoyingly repetitive. Then there's the AI, which is undoubtedly some of the best I've ever seen during battles, but tends to be overly passive in less hostile situations. After you take out one of the enemy's bases, you'd think they'd come at you with all they've got to stop you regrouping and doing any more damage. But more often than not,

the enemy tends to just sit back and wait for you to come to them, which gives you more than enough time to gather resources and build up your attack force.

While I can almost turn a blind eye to the two criticisms above, it's hard to ignore the fact that there's absolutely no multiplayer options to *Hostile Waters*, whatsoever. I can understand why there are no Internet options, as it's pretty demanding on even the most powerful PC, but the absence of LAN-play is a mystery. If Rage had included co-operative and deathmatch options, *Hostile Waters* would probably have gained Classic status.

Playing *Hostile Waters* has been the most entertaining gaming experience I've had since I first tried *Counter-Strike*. It's a perfect blend of strategic planning and manic action, backed by a thrilling storyline and a captivating sense of realism. You feel like you're actually there, making a difference, fighting for a better future of peace and harmony. But before you reach this gameplay-unfriendly ideal, you'll have the time of your life fighting the war to achieve it. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII-266 **Memory** 48Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb video card **WE SAY** PIII-450+, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Intense action • Superb open-ended strategic options • Customisable units • Generally superb AI • Thrilling plot
⬇ **DOWNERS** Occasionally corny script • Takes too long to get the better units • No multiplayer options • Enemy AI can be overly passive

87

Why make love when you can make war?

The deadly Ransom, aka Tarquin Poncanby-Smythe.

The storyline throws up some interesting twists.

Build up an attack force and blow up some bad guys. Or some farmers.

That pesky mountain goat had it coming.

Not bad for a silicon chip.

⊙ WALKTHROUGH

HOSTILE INTENTIONS

Open-ended it may be, but there are still some fundamentals you need to know if you're gonna be a glory boy

1 After your briefing you must build up an attack force. Click on the spanner in the top right-hand side of your screen to bring up the build options.

2 Click on the unit you want to build from the left-hand menu. Drag and drop a Soul Catcher chip and any augmentations you want to add onto the spaces provided. Now click on the arrow pointing right to build it.

3 Follow this process until you've built four vehicles. Press F1 to return to the strategic map. Click on each unit and program it with a patrol route by clicking on the areas you want it to explore.

4 Once you've done this for each unit, sit back and watch by pressing F1. If a unit finds anything of interest it'll react accordingly. However, if you fancy having a go, simply press Ctrl to take over the vehicle yourself.

No, really. You couldn't hit a Barndoor.
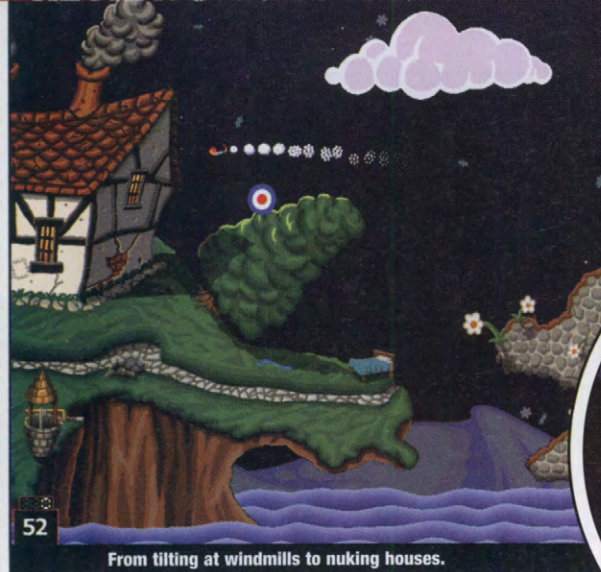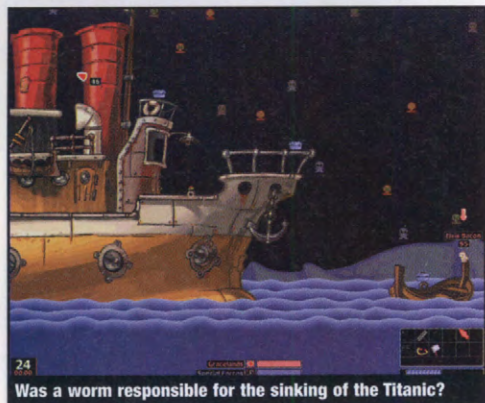
From tilting at windmills to nuking houses.

Napalm or skunk power, bungee or baseball bat... Ah, decisions.

Was a worm responsible for the sinking of the Titanic?

The happy, smiley, in-your-face game of war.

More game variations than you'd have thought possible.

WORMS WORLD PARTY

⭐ Virgin • £19.99 • Out now

Elvis Sausage gets a really good dose of *Worms*

You probably won't thank me for sharing this, but in one glorious three-week spell, worms were responsible for some of the most delicious perversions and ridiculous sexual positions of my life. Before you start phoning the editor, or the RSPCA, allow to me explain.

IN PERSPECTIVE

'Humorous' games are rarely what they say on the tin, especially if they've originated from our colonial cousins. Still, for a dash of vindictive social interaction and a bit of a giggle, you might try the following:

Sheep

Stupid Invaders

Worms Armageddon

Worms World Party

I had a girlfriend at the time who liked to gamble, liked to gamble a lot. And, like a sort of digital strip Twister, *Worms* makes a great icebreaker. It's an ideal game to play for forfeits.

Of course, I never played to lose... what do you take me for?

That was five years ago. *Worms* has been knocking about since 1995, and with each incarnation it's become slicker and more polished (in contrast to myself), while steadfastly resisting the temptation to go 3D. Somewhere up north in *Worm* development land there is a team of chaps wandering about endlessly reciting the mantra 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'.

THE EARLY BIRD

The idea behind the game is simple enough, taking inspiration from the pre-PC classic *Tanks* (where you took turns to lob shells at each other), and a dose of attitude from *Lemmings*.

You have teams of worms who take turns to employ a selection of daft weapons (petrol bombs, skunk, exploding sheep, etc). Last worm standing wins the game. The skill is choosing the right weapon and worm to attack before the timer kicks you off your turn, the fun comes from the degree of vindictiveness it inspires

> ## The fun comes from the degree of vindictiveness it inspires when a few players are gathered around the same PC

when a few players are gathered around the same PC.

If you've never played *Worms* and you can lay claim to some friends and a sense of humour, then you owe it to yourself to get a copy. It's the definitive gather-your-mates, post-pub game.

A NEW KIND OF THRILL?

In terms of weaponry and challenge, *Worms World Party*

is the pinnacle of worm achievement. That's because it's the latest version, cunningly. Problems only come to the surface if you've already got one of the earlier versions. *Worms* is a one-gag wonder and if it's a gag you've already paid for then you won't be needing it again.

Aside from minor additions and a different set of mission-driven games alongside the team match-ups (incidentally, bloody hard at times, those missions), the only really new attraction is the chance to play multiplayer games across the Internet. Hence the 'World Party' tag.

Now you might feel differently from me on this one, but I've tried the Internet play and while it works, it certainly isn't enough to drag my wallet out of whichever dusty crevice

I have it tucked away in, even if it is this cheap.

And that's got nothing to do with being unable to collect forfeits over the Internet, thank you. If that were the case, chatrooms would be a whole lot duller. Trust me. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P100 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 2x speed CD ROM, 2Mb video card **WE SAY** Well, OK, maybe a P200 then

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Often hilarious gameplay • Online play • Some new bits

⊖ **DOWNERS** A one-gag wonder • Not enough new bits • Lacks real incentive to re-visit

79 Fun with a capital 'fuh', but it's in danger of flogging the poor worm to death

excessive
force

WingMan Force 3D

WingMan RumblePad™

WingMan Formula™ Force GP

It's the closest thing to reality. WingMan® Force 3D.
Get the advantage you need to win, the sensations
you need to make it real. Feel the force, with Logitech®.
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WingMan

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CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

★ £34.99 • EA Games • Out now

Horror maestro Clive Barker plots a journey into the depths of terror and the grotesque. *Mark* 'Hellraiser' *Hill* rides shotgun

G ames are not usually the haunts of natural storytellers. Even the greatest titles suffer from conventional plots with little character development – *Half-Life* being a prime example. *Deus Ex* developed a multi-layered narrative, but it still relied too much on mission-based gameplay and traditional sci-fi paranoia. The only successful attempt in recent memory is *Planescape: Torment*, but then that was almost an interactive novel, so important was the written word in driving the game forward.

So when someone like Clive Barker, one of the greatest horror/fantasy writers of our age, decides to try his hand at computer entertainment, you know something special is going to happen.

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Clive Barker's inclusion in the title is slightly deceptive. Most of the story to the game was already in place when he joined the project, but his involvement has meant that *Undying* has become a much more sophisticated beast, with a strong main character and a more developed plot than your average game. The vision is much closer to Edgar Allan Poe and HP Lovecraft than anything Barker has ever produced (indeed, some of his suggestions were deemed too outlandish and perverse for a mainstream audience) and is a pretty close approximation of what the two writers would have

come up with had they teamed up to create a first-person horror game – though there would surely have been a few more characters in love with their terminally ill 14-year-old cousins. The tone is close to that of *Realms Of The Haunting*, bringing to mind that early 20th century demonic evil personified by Aleister Crowley.

You play the part of Patrick Galloway, an investigator into the supernatural who travels to Ireland to help an old war buddy, Jeremiah Covenant. The Covenant estate has fallen under some sort of curse – most of Jeremiah's brothers and sisters are dead and strange creatures roam the mansion and its surroundings. All of this is connected to a nearby medieval monastery where monks have carried out rites that let an unspeakable evil into the human realm. You learn more about this past and about the thoughts and fears of the Covenant family through diaries and letters you find scattered about; these also help imbue *Undying* with a sense of history. The past inhabits the present, while your own actions aim to retread the footsteps of those who have gone before you. The house in which the first section of the game takes place is a typical gothic mansion, its shadow hanging over the lives of everyone concerned. So much for Edgar Allen Poe's contribution. Lovecraft's influence is easily felt in the lurking horrors that have invaded this world from other dimensions.

These howlers are incredibly fast and have razor-sharp claws.

Straight out of Lovecraft's *Cthulhu* bestiary this one.
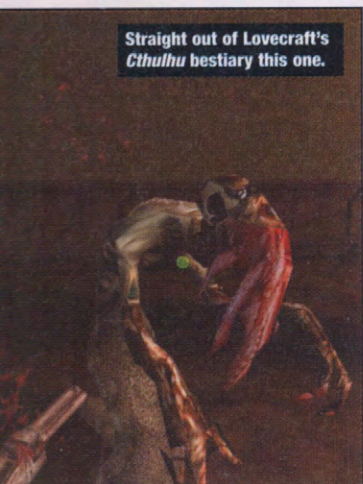
THE CANDYMAN

We've seen the future of horror…

Clive Barker's move into computer games is not particularly surprising if you consider the versatile nature of his work, which comes in as many forms as he can find. Born in Liverpool, Barker started out making weird independent art films (like the unsettling *Salomé*), before moving into short stories, plays, comic books, novels and finally big budget films. His fiction has moved steadily away from the macabre horror of his *Books Of Blood* collection or the *Hellraiser* series of films and into twisted fantasy – with the occasional foray into the mainstream – so it will be interesting to see where his next step in videogames will be.

The graphical detail brings to mind another stunning looker: *Vampire*.

Watch your screen fill with your blood if you get hit.

Take a dip into the past.

The tone is set by the marvellous presentation, which includes some suitably Carmina Burana-ish music and some good voice acting (despite a couple of slightly dodgy Irish accents). Graphically it's nothing less than stunning, making great use of the highly-tweaked *Unreal* engine

controlled sense of dread with the presence of creatures who jump at you from dark corners. You can always hear them before you can see them, thanks to *Undying*'s use of sound, which is on a par with anything we've encountered before. The air crackles with the sound of the weather, while the

themselves at you, leaving you desperately trying to find the controls to aim for their heads instead of firing wildly around them (damage is localised, so a well-placed shot can kill). I lost count of the number of times I jumped back in my seat and let out an embarrassingly girlish scream of terror.

"I lost count of the number of times I jumped back in my seat and let out an embarrassingly girlish scream of terror"

and offering a staggering amount of visual detail. The drawback to this is that there are far too many loading delays – particularly in the early stages of the game – which disrupt the pace of the game and can become quite exasperating. The architecture and interior decoration are breathtaking throughout, and you will want to explore every corner of the massive mansion. The fine detail doesn't quite extend to the servants though, who all look remarkably similar to one another, alive or dead. Later levels feature more wide open areas, which thankfully reduces loading times.

One thing does remain constant, though. You'll be petrified all the way.

REDRUM

Games are still struggling to engage us emotionally but they have already made great advances in exploring our most primal instinct: fear. *Undying*'s atmosphere brings it close to the sustained psychological unease of *System Shock 2* without abandoning the shock tactics of *Aliens Vs Predator*. The ambience is always tense, balancing a

unobtrusive music, the distant howl of monsters, the creaking of floorboards, even the breathing of a nearby creature all contribute to your apprehension. Then, when you're attacked – and this is one of the game's many great touches – your screen is physically affected, jolting your vision and tearing streaks of blood that last a few seconds, long enough to throw you off balance and make you panic. It's subtly and effectively done and every bit as frightening as getting attacked by aliens in *AvP*. You'll often find yourself recoiling from the monitor as creatures hurl

⬆ That's a nasty place to aim, even if he is undead.

Another unsettling, and highly original device, is the way you can sometimes peer into past horrors. As you progress through the game you acquire a number of spells. One of these (Scrye) allows you to see in the dark, and allows you to witness moments in the past. When you reach an appropriate area a ghostly voice reverberates in your head inviting you to look around. Harmless walls suddenly become covered in bloody handprints and awful – and sometimes helpful – scenes are re-enacted, telling you the story without having to resort to words. It's just like *The Shining*.

DESCENT INTO THE MAELSTROM

If there's one area in which *Undying* is slightly weak it's in its puzzles. Object finding and door opening are the norm for the most part, although there are some good magic related puzzles along the way. Since it doesn't pretend to be an adventure game, what's more j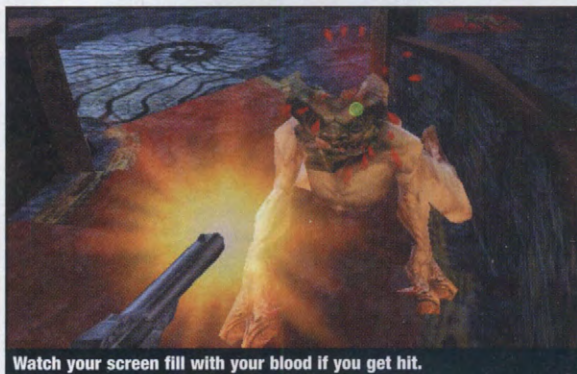arring is the little scope for interaction with the environment you have. There's no way to interact with things or people, so you have to rely on the game doing it for you. The only things you can touch are those that directly affect the next few

THE PREMATURE BURIAL

Great death animations help you go out in style

Despite the game's title you'll be doing plenty of dying. The good news is that every death is followed by an imaginative sequence, which is different for every creature who does the killing. With Clive Barker, dying is always worth it.

The swordsmen turn their back on you before stylishly driving their weapon through your stomach.

Howlers rip your head off, swallow it whole and wail in triumph.

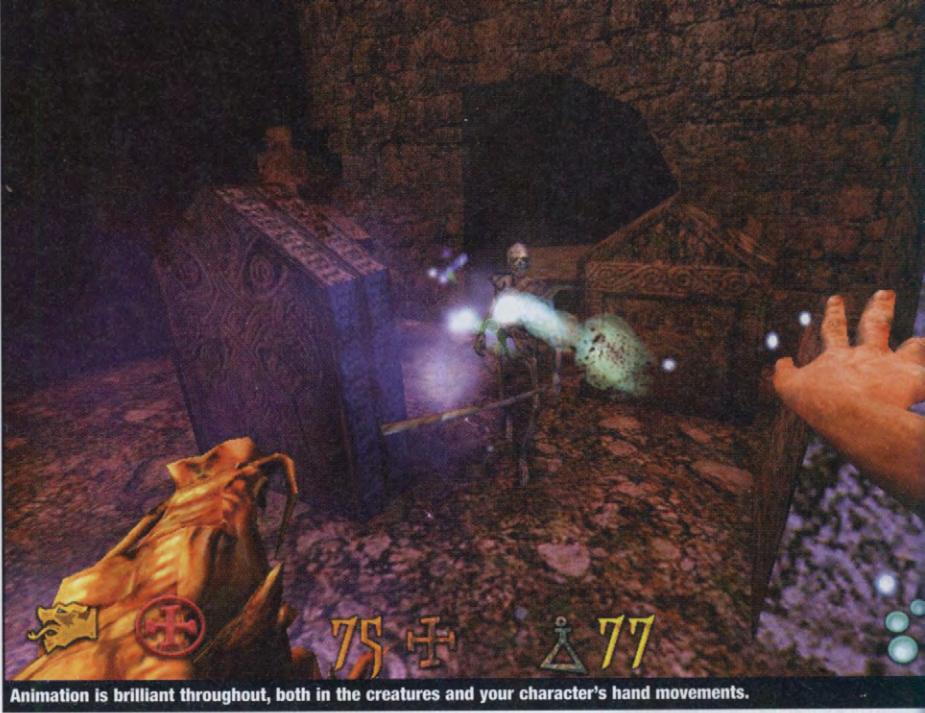Skeletons go for the good old 'ripping your heart out' method.

These creepy men spill your guts with one swift knife slash.

Skeletons are mindless, relentless and surprisingly scary.

Animation is brilliant throughout, both in the creatures and your character's hand movements.

moments in the game and you are shepherded most of the way by doors that conveniently lock and jam shut when it suits them.

Despite this, there are so many small details that catch your attention and you become so lost in the second-to-second survival, the minor irritations soon go away. The use of magic also elevates it above other titles, adding a different type of gameplay only hinted at in the spell-filled *Wheel Of Time*. There are occasions when magic works better than your trusty revolver and a few well aimed spells can do more harm than a *Wild Bunch* truckload of shrapnel.

One type of magic in particular stands out, providing you with some of the most memorable moments in the game. The revive spell can be used on a dead monster or human to bring it back to life for a brief period and fight on your side. But use it on a living person and you'll witness one of the most awe-inspiring scenes you'll ever see, as they turn their gun on themselves to blow their brains out with a wild cry of madness or slash open their own throats with a gurgle of surprise.

If they have any friends around they're quite likely to run away and hide, displaying some excellent AI in the process. In fact, even the dumbest of creatures is intelligent enough to provide a real challenge. Monsters hunt in packs and withdraw to regroup only to attack again when they see you reloading. Some humans attack you with swords if you're close enough and then with guns when you're further away. In later levels, you have to break into a monastery guarded by monks that quickly bring to mind the guards in *Thief*, as they say things like "I think I heard something" before walking away if they fail to notice you.

WEAVEWORLD

Undying is not without its faults, but it remains one of the most unsettling first-person shooters we've ever come across. A multiplayer patch is expected to follow in the next few months but since this was always meant to be a single-player experience, you won't really notice its absence. Hopefully, this game

has whet Barker's appetite and will encourage him to get involved in a project from the outset. We've said many times that games are still in their infancy, and that is certainly true of their narrative and emotional engagement. Perhaps Barker can help them to grow up. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM PROCESSOR P400 **MEMORY** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Does the job, but you'll need a 32Mb card to get all the visual detail

PCZVERDICT

● **UPPERS** Fabulously detailed graphics • Extremely atmospheric and scary • Great use of sound • Lots of good touches
● **DOWNERS** Too many loading delays • Insufficient variety of enemies • No interaction with environment
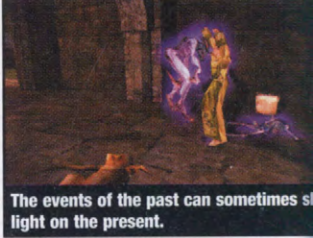
85 The future of horror
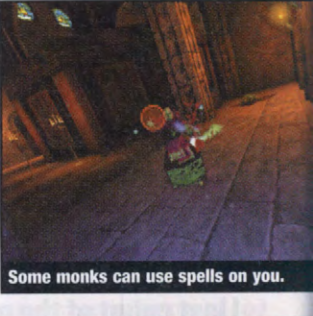
Some monks can use spells on you.
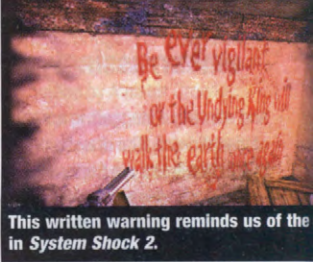
This written warning reminds us of the in *System Shock 2*.

The events of the past can sometimes s light on the present.

> **"One of the most unsettling first-person shooters we've ever come across"**

The monsters are genuinely scary but not quite varied enough.

IN PERSPECTIVE

For more gorgeous FPS action with spells try *Wheel Of Time*, for a similar atmosphere you could turn to *System Shock 2* and for sudden scares there are few better than *Aliens Vs Predator*.

Aliens Vs Predator

System Shock 2

Thief II

Undying

Wheel of Time
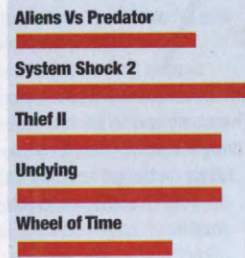
THE DAMNATION GAME

Suicide is no laughing matter, but watching your enemies losing control and blowing their brains out is strangely enthralling

Bang! Um, he seems to have shot himself.

Watching them slit their own throats can be quite disturbing.

A nice touch is that soldiers can transfer from mounted to foot and vice versa as required.

In many places the game stops while dialogue or tutorial text is delivered by leading characters.

A large army may look impressive but they will eat through your food reserves in no time.

THREE KINGDOMS: FATE OF THE DRAGON

⭐ £29.99 • Eidos • March 16

Hordes of Chinese soldiers storm over city walls, and all the while *Laurence Scotford* is still trying desperately to light his firecracker

C harles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe – names that every British school child holds dear, and whose rip-roaring tales of love, life and derring-do in these sceptred isles never fail to hold teary-eyed readers spellbound... Well maybe they don't have quite that effect, but at least you've

In ancient China it was considered important to impress people with the size of your weapon.

heard of them. Now what if I said to you – Luo Guanzhong. Then you'd look at me blankly or say bless you. But you might say, "Ah yes, Luo Guanzhong, the famous 14th-century novelist, author of *The Three Kingdoms*." Which would tell me you either went to school in China or you're one of those irritating gits who knows everything and always wins at Trivial Pursuit.

Thanks to Eidos however, the venerable Luo is about to become, if not a household name, at least a little better known outside his native land. It is his historical novel about the fall of the Han dynasty in the 2nd century and the subsequent division of China into three separate kingdoms that forms the basis of this real-time strategy game. To add to the authenticity the game itself is also a product of that vast and ancient nation, having been developed by Chinese team Object Software.

DEJA VU

The blurb that comes with the game tells you that you must take up the mantle of one of the three warlords of the time, Cao Cao, Lui Bei and Sun Quan. By using guile and cunning, or failing that, outright brutality, you must lead your third of China on a mission to bring the other two kingdoms under your wing and rebuild the shattered nation. Great, you're thinking as you eagerly open the box while simultaneously phoning for a number 23, a 54, and some prawn crackers on the side. The evocative intro sequence, depicting the three generals battling it out on the plains of China only seeks to get you even more in the mood for something a little different and then...

At this point you might be forgiven for checking that you haven't put one of your old games in the CD drive by mistake. For by now a rather alarming sense of déjà vu will be creeping over you.

Hang on, haven't I played this somewhere before? Indeed you have, because *Three Kingdoms: Fate of the Dragon* bears an uncanny resemblance to *Age Of Empires*. We're not just talking a passing graphical likeness here; great swathes of gameplay have also been liberally lifted from Ensemble's masterpiece, especially the style of settlement building and resource management.

SAVING GRACES

Having made my point – *Three Kingdoms* is more of a tribute band than it is the next Abba – I won't dwell on it any further. Let's turn instead to some of the more original touches that Object Software has implemented. The first of these becomes apparent in the way you use your non-

combatant population in the game. While it is necessary to build up a sizeable force of workers to gather resources, build new structures and turn raw materials into more useful ones, they can also be pressed into active service. By sending members of your population to a barracks you can train them up as sergeants and thereby begin to build your military force. Where this dual-use scenario really comes in handy is during times of peace. Instead of having your army standing about idly and

IN PERSPECTIVE

Age Of Empires II is the classic game in this mould, Cossacks is even better. If you're after an RTS with a far eastern character, try *Shogun*.

Age Of Empires II

Three Kingdoms

Shogun

Cossacks

consuming all your hard-earned resources, you can put them back to work as humble builders and gatherers. Then, when things start hotting up again, you can re-train them as soldiers at a fraction of the original time and cost.

Some thought has also gone into the art of war. Your soldiers march on their stomachs and need to be kept fed and watered if you want them to perform at their peak. While they are garrisoned in a friendly town they have free access to food and wine, as long

is more akin to some older RPGs like the *Ultima* series than most RTS games. Each city has its own detailed map, which is where most of the construction and resource-management activity goes on. There is also a 'wilderness' map at a cruder scale in which cities are represented by buildings. You control units in exactly the same way in both maps, but just switch between the two as necessary. No doubt Object Software had sound reasons for arranging things this

> ❝ *Three Kingdoms* bears an uncanny resemblance to *Age Of Empires*, liberally lifting great swathes of gameplay ❞

as you have some stockpiled, and will stay on top form. However, as soon as they start traipsing about in the wilderness they will begin to decline. Keep them hungry and thirsty for long enough and they will degrade to the point that they look about as dedicated and confident as England going into another World Cup.

Fortunately you can offset disaster with a bit of forward planning. By equipping your army with one or more supply wagons, you can set up staging camps en route to the site of your intended conquest and these help to keep your force in good shape.

A SIEGE MY LIEGE?

Provided you spare enough resources for some research you can also build a variety of siege equipment, and fortunately each city in the game has a pre-made gate and walls to avoid disappointment. After all, there's nothing worse than dragging a siege ladder halfway across the country only to find that the inconsiderate sods haven't even bothered building a wall in the first place. However, whether you scale the walls or just tear down the gates, every combat situation tends to deteriorate quickly into a bit of an unstructured brawl.

Three Kingdoms employs an unusual two-map system, which

way rather than having the customary single-world map, but I have to confess I found it rather annoying having to switch repeatedly between the wilderness map and the various city maps in the game.

It's great to see some original product coming out of China, and hopefully we'll see a lot more of it in future. But I have to be honest and say that *Three Kingdoms* didn't quite do it for me. If you haven't played any of the *Age Of Empires* series extensively and the Chinese scenario sounds like your bag then you will definitely get many hours of pleasure out of this product, but sadly a classic it is not. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133, **Memory** 32Mb **WE SAY** Pentium II and a decent accelerated graphics card will do the trick

PCZ VERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Multi-functional units • Supply-chain and siege scenarios
⬇ **DOWNERS** Very little originality • Irritating two-map system

77 It's *Age Of Empires* with only one civilisation

Scattered around the countryside are numerous headless buddhas. If you can find and retrieve the missing heads and repair them you are given a random reward from heaven. In this case a handful of archers.
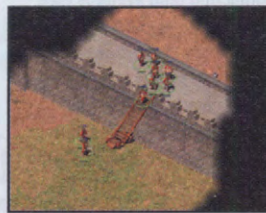
SIEGE MENTALITY

Learn how to mount a siege in a weekend

1 First take a few men good and true and give them some swords.

2 Build a support wagon and load it with some tents and some tuck.

3 Go and beat up a few local neighbourhoods and demand money.

4 Set up camp. Remember to get permission if in a farmer's field.

5 Storm the enemy's walls. Scream and wave swords for added effect.

6 Kill, and optionally pillage, before retiring to the pub for a well-earned pint.

A focused shipbuilding effort can turn the sea into a real junk yard.

These fires in your tent are most inauspicious.

Battles often degenerate into messy brawls.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

We put *Three Kingdoms* and *Age Of Empires II* head to head

Age Of Empires II **Three Kingdoms**

Our contenders first try their hand at a spot of wood chopping. I'd say it's pretty much an even race at this early stage.

Onto the farming round now, and *Three Kingdoms* has astounded us with a nice display of variety. The judges are going to like that.

Into the building round and *Age Of Empires* is closing in on *Three Kingdoms*. Here *AOE* delivers a decisive blow with a fantastic demonstration of co-ordinated hammering.

Into the final furlong and they fight it out among themselves, but at the post *Age Of Empires* has beaten *Three Kingdoms* by a head (plus a few odd limbs and intestines).

EUROPA UNIVERSALIS

⭐ £29.99 • Koch Distribution • Out March

While everybody else strides towards European unity, *Laurence Scotford* messes up by invading France

F rom the mid-12th century for a period of about 300 years, the minor kingdoms and principalities of Europe began, through a series of border-defining wars and inter-marriages, to coalesce into many of the modern European nations we know today. By 1492, the year in which *Europa Universalis* begins, the aristocratic gene pool had already become worryingly deficient from too many marriages to cousins and half-sisters, and Columbus was about to prove once and for all that you couldn't fall off the edge of the world, even if you wanted to.

If that sounded a bit too much like your old history teacher rabbitting on, and you began to fall asleep in the middle of the

> **The historical research that has gone into this opus has clearly been a labour of love**

first sentence, then sorry, but *Europa Universalis* isn't for you. While this huge strategy game is clearly influenced to a certain extent by the likes of the *Civilisation* series, its real raison d'être is historical accuracy. You don't have to play the game for long to realise that the historical research that has gone into this opus has been a labour of love for Swedish developer Paradox Entertainment. Which means that, if historical war-gaming is your

IN PERSPECTIVE

Both *Risk* and *Diplomacy*, being based on board games, are simpler to play. The ageing *Civilization* series doesn't have the same historical richness but is certainly more instantly accessible.

Diplomacy

Risk II

Call To Power II

Europa Universalis

bag, this is going to be like Christmas all over again.

GOING, GOING... GONE
On the surface, *Europa Universalis* is just another strategy game based around the tried and tested trio of resource management, exploration and combat. The visuals, based on stylised world maps drawn in the crude fashion of early explorers, are good without being mind-blowing. The interface is functional and fairly easy to get to grips with, and the pace of the game is about right (and can be easily adjusted using the pause and time acceleration controls). So far, so average – you've seen all that before. Extended play is required to reveal some of the more interesting facets of the game.

Probably the best of these is an attempt to accurately simulate the difficulties of maintaining armies and navies given the poor communication and supply lines that would have existed at the time. You might very well build a huge army or navy, but as soon as you take them on a campaign to conquer neighbouring provinces they will begin to suffer from desertion, illness and all the other things that can cause the size of your force to dwindle. This means that you can't just go on the rampage – you have to carefully weigh up the pros and cons of each battle and choose your targets wisely.

THE PEASANTS ARE REVOLTING
Another of the game's strong points is the consideration given to the political aftermath of warfare. Even if you manage to win a territory you may still have to deal with the indigenous population. A fledgling colony in a newly conquered province may find itself at odds with the belligerent locals, especially if

conflicting faith systems give rise to religious intolerance. Fortunately you have options other than sword and cannon. A particularly good strategy is to pave the way for future expansion by setting up strategic trading posts.

Europa Universalis is probably not going to have you wetting yourself with excitement from the moment you open the box. But it does have its rewards if you are willing to put in some serious playing time. Mission-based single-player games add some spice to the massive 300-year-long campaign game and there is also support for up to eight players in the multiplayer mode. If you prefer fantasy settings and you're after instant gratification then this isn't going to do much for you, but for fans of historical simulations and war-gaming this is probably going to be an essential purchase. **PCZ**
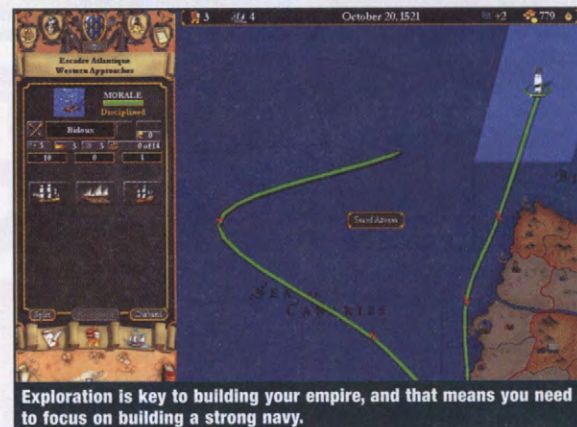
TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Pentium 200MHz, 64Mb RAM, 2Mb Video RAM. **WE SAY** More video memory would help move things along a bit more smoothly

PCZ VERDICT

🔺 **UPPERS** Historical accuracy • Scope for varied economic and diplomatic strategies

🔻 **DOWNERS** Relatively steep learning curve • Average audio-visuals

76 If you're an avid player of games like *Diplomacy*, then this could be just the ticket for you

After Europe, set sail for the New World

Battles are handled statistically, and they are far from the only way to lose ships and troops.

Exploration is key to building your empire, and that means you need to focus on building a strong navy.

Trade is just as important as warfare. Without a strong economic strategy you won't sustain a fighting force for very long.

The game is played on a stylised map of the (known) world. The regions depicted are all historically accurate for the time.

THE MUMMY

★ £29.99 • Konami • Out now

Who's da Mummy? *Rhianna Pratchett* investigates

It might be because I'm from the *Young Ones* generation, but I can't take a hero called Rick seriously. Then again, I can't take Brendan Fraser seriously either, so it works out quite nicely. It was inevitable that the Hollywood bubble gum flick *The Mummy* would inspire something approximating a game, probably involving the words 'romp' and 'action-packed' in the marketing. And here it is, sticking to Universal's licence like toilet paper to the shoes of the unwary.

There's no need to go into the story in any depth, because it's exactly like the movie. You play the all-American hero Rick O'Connell, who has to complete various quests centring around Hamunaptra, the Lost City Of The Dead, in order to defeat the awakened Mummy No 1, Imhotep. From the outset it looks a bit like *Lara Croft Does Egypt*, but unfortunately the game has none of the enduring qualities of the

Tomb Raider games like engaging gameplay, exploration or any kind of interesting action.

The characters are awkward and chunky, and Rick's speech has obviously been dug up from some ancient voice archive marked "manly and heroic". It has a similar look to *Arabian Nights* and features your average set of actions, plus a few fun weapons like a sword and throwing amulet. The monster AI is pretty, although zombies have never been renowned for their intelligence, and enemies sometimes get stuck behind a wall or on some mysterious glitch on the floor.

The best part of this average game is the sound, which is taken straight from the movie and is worked into the game in an incredibly atmospheric way, the Mummy's screams in particular are guaranteed to come back to haunt you on dark

nights. It's a pity there aren't more adventure elements to this game, because the story has quite a lot of potential. As it is, however, it's an attractively packaged, but ultimately empty hack 'n' slash. So pretty much like the film really.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM 266 MHz, 32 Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** 400MHz PII 64Mb RAM, 12Mb 3D card
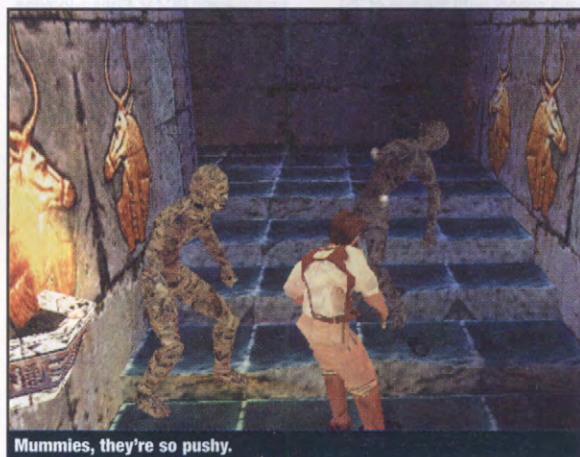
PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Music and sound effects
⬇ **DOWNERS** Bad AI • Chunky characters • Not enough of a challenge
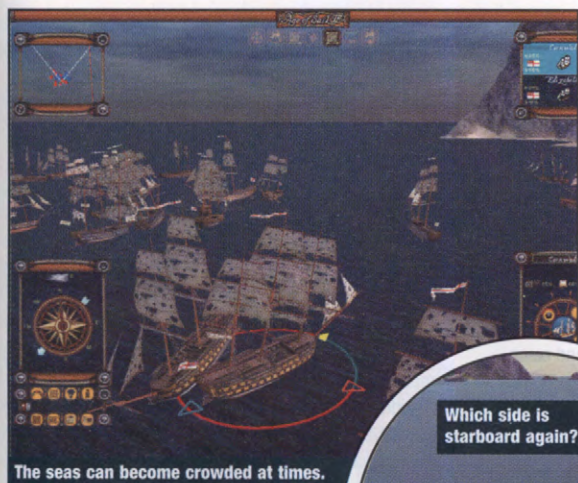
52 Dead and buried

Look I know you're upset about the muddy footprints, but put the big hammer down pal.

Mummies, they're so pushy.

The seas can become crowded at times.

Which side is starboard again?

A straightforward interface helps ease you in to the captain's chair.

AGE OF SAIL II

★ £29.99 • Take 2 • Out now

Richie Shoemaker sets sail for the high seas

Largely self-inflicted it may be, but there is at least one trait we computer gamers share with the old sea dogs of the 18th century – malnutrition. And it's a feature thankfully avoided in *Age Of Sail II*, along with much of the boring navigation that a true simulation of 18th and 19th century naval warfare would entail. You are the captain or the admiral rather than the cabin boy, and as such your view of the battles is from above rather than behind a cannon.

As a 3D real-time strategy, *Age Of Sail II* works rather well. Though cramped, the interface is intuitive and the game easy to get to grips with. At its simplest you set a speed by messing with the sails, a heading by clicking on the

compass and when in range of the enemy, you either pepper their sails with grapeshot, or breach their hull with cannon. And if anyone is still afloat, you can come alongside and send in the marines – which sounds more interesting than it is.

Although there are more than 100 one-off scenarios and a few linear campaigns, there's very little atmosphere or story in the game. As you progress through the ranks and command larger fleets of ships there's certainly plenty to do, but unless naval combat really greases your gangplank you'll find the gameplay rather repetitive, with very little to drive you on.

Functional rather than attractive, *Age Of Sail II*'s graphics may remind some of you of last month's *Sea Dogs*. If so, well spotted, as Russian developer Akella is responsible for both games, and while *Age Of Sail II*

may seem like a cut-down version, it has its place. My interest in the period is inspired only by pirate flicks of the 1930s, so I'd have to say that *Sea Dogs* is a better, more interesting game. But then, what do I know?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Apart from during some of the larger battles, this configuration should work just fine

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Accessible • Hundreds of missions
⬇ **DOWNERS** Repetitive • Not very engaging

63 Not for those with just a passing interest

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX

⊙ £29.99 • Acclaim • Out now

Steve Hill finally gets a BMX to call his own

For many adults, BMX bikes evoke memories of youthful bravado, as increasingly dangerous stunts were performed without the benefit of proper safety procedures, inevitably resulting in injury, both to pride and limbs. However, for a select number of devotees, primarily Americans (who don't actually leave school until the age of 35), performing paralysis-defying stunts was perfected into a competitive sport. Enter ten-time world champion Dave Mirra, who Acclaim hopes will do for BMX games what Tony Hawk did for skateboarding ones.

On the evidence here, he won't. A lazy conversion of an average PlayStation game is not what you maintain a hideously expensive and perennially problematic PC for. Cheap-looking menu screens give the game away, and while the actual biker graphics are passable, the environment is regularly sullied by huge tears in the scenery.

If you can ignore that, there's a vaguely playable game to be had, and it is essentially *Tony Hawk's* on two wheels, with a variety of improbable stunts opening up further areas and bikes. Most of the challenges are simple enough, and falling off the bike actually takes something of a concerted effort.

It's mildly damning to say that the best part of the game is the music, which comes from the Beavis-pleasing likes of Cypress Hill, Rancid, and Social Distortion. As a further deterrent, the game is from the same developer as *Three Lions*, England's embarrassing Official World Cup game of a few years ago. Dave Mirra is a vast improvement on that, but why would you pay good money for something that you're only going to play for an hour?

double peg grind
Anyone can do that.

This is Dave Mirra, BMX bandit.

PCZVERDICT

⊙ **UPPERS** Instantly playable • Decent tunes

⊙ **DOWNERS** Ropey PSX conversion • No multiplayer • No online support

48 Less fun than riding a BMX

Attempting to jump a moving train isn't advisable.

AMERICA

⊙ Data Becker • £24.99 • Out Now

Tony Cribb went west for a taste of the wild side

Play as the Indians, Mexicans, outlaws or settlers.
Yee-ha.

"Come out with your hands up, we've got you partially surrounded."

New from Data Becker comes *America*, the latest in the seemingly never-ending line of real-time strategy games. Complete with an easy-to-use interface and superbly presented graphics, *America* is set in the Wild West and like most games of this genre you start off with just a couple of people and a hut. Choose one of Indians, Mexicans, outlaws and settlers, each of which have their own technology tree and attributes. Funnily enough the cannons and rifles of the settlers tend to give you a slight edge over the bows and arrows of the Indians.

The game is superbly addictive, but it's not all cavalry charges and wagon circles. Fantasies about gun-slinging, scalping, OK-Corralling, and Alamo-style shoot-outs will have to wait until you develop your technology. It's a case of the cart before the horse – you need to learn to process timber, mine gold, breed horses, build farms and so on.

As far as game modes are concerned, there are Indian, Mexican, Desperado and US campaigns, each of which have a basic mission, such as getting your wagon train from A to B. As campaigns get progressively harder, strategy soon becomes vital. You can't just ride off towards the Mexican camp thinking only of pillage and plunder – you have to think about leaving a defensive force at your own settlement. Otherwise, while you're razing that Mexican camp and rustling their horses, them pesky Injuns will be in and out of your camp quicker than a racoon up a tree... having scalped your womenfolk and torched your tents.

The upshot is that Data Becker has produced a decent Wild West RTS, but one that is hard to get into and is ultimately less rewarding than *AOE* or *Cossacks*. The only unique selling point is the Wild West scenarios, but if that pokes your fire, put some corned beef hash on, pull on your best pair of chaps and saddle up.
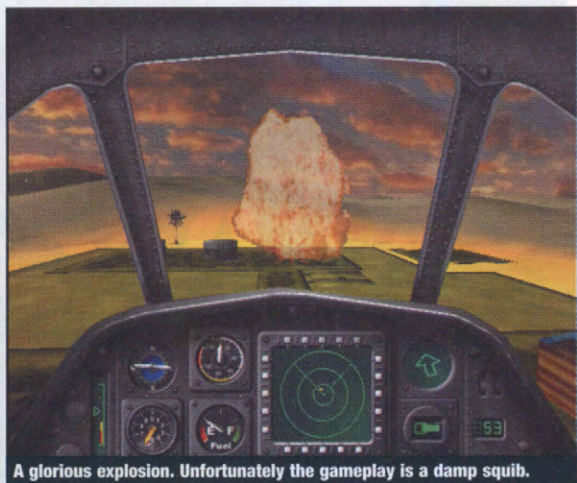
PCZVERDICT

⊙ **UPPERS** Three highly varied teams to play • Huge scope for tactical diversity

⊙ **DOWNERS** Unbalanced weaponry

71 A reasonably addictive and enjoyable RTS

SUPER HUEY III

⭐ £19.99 • Cosmi Software • Out now

Martin Korda refused to be drawn into an obvious joke about playing with his chopper. Damn it

A glorious explosion. Unfortunately the gameplay is a damp squib.

Leave on the shelves and walk out of the shop.

Why did they bother? 16 years ago when Cosmi Software's first two *Super Huey* games appeared on the shelves, they were called revolutionary. Now, nearly two decades later, for some inexplicable reason, they've decided to make a third. A hopeless nostalgic might call it retro. Personally I think the term regurgitated sub-standard rubbish is more appropriate.

This pathetic excuse for a game tries to soup-up the slow, one-dimensional gameplay of the original with some hugely unimpressive 3D visuals. The menu screens look like they have been ported straight from the Commodore 64 original, which is not only sloppy but patronising, considering the game demands a PIII 500 to run at a decent pace.

To make matters worse, the enemy AI is hopelessly amateurish, resembling an E-grade GCSE Computer Studies project rather than a classic action game. Many missions can be completed in under a minute with a simple flanking manoeuvre, even when the map is infested with enemy units.

Your helicopter's weapons array (if you can call it an array) consists of missiles, bombs, a flame thrower and a machine gun, which fires popcorn-looking bullets at your enemies. What's more, your craft couldn't outrun a milk float, and if it so much as clips a leaf it disintegrates into a flaming mass. And this is the most advanced helicopter in the world is it? Do me a favour.

The one saving grace is the in-game music, which does manage to raise your pulse marginally above cadaver level – for a short time at least. It's just a shame that the same can't be said for the turgid Hammond organ cheese you're subjected to during the blocky and unclear menu screens. Cosmi Software really shouldn't have bothered and quite frankly, neither should you.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P300 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** Unbelievably, you need a PIII 500 to play this rubbish at a decent speed

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Good in-game music
⬇ **DOWNERS** Everything else

15 A pointless rehash best forgotten
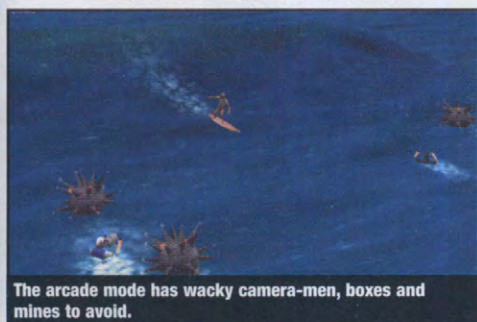
The arcade mode has wacky camera-men, boxes and mines to avoid.
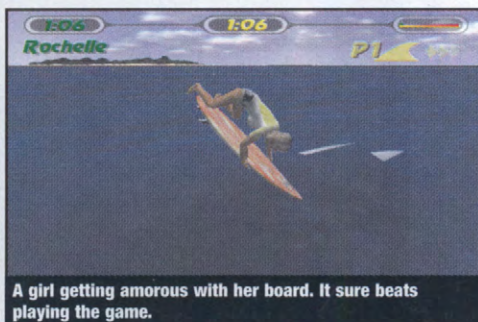
A girl getting amorous with her board. It sure beats playing the game.
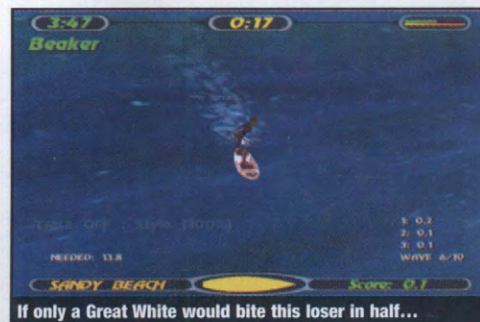
If only a Great White would bite this loser in half…

CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER

⭐ £29.99 • Mattel • Out now

Mark Hill loves waves. But in this case he's just using his middle finger

Tony Hawk's 2 really has opened up the possibilities for extreme sports games, meaning that *Championship Surfer* couldn't be appearing in a better climate. It still manages to land on its arse, though.

The first thing that hits you is the music. Where *Tony Hawk's* offered a fabulous blend of Rage Against The Machine, Papa Roach and Public Enemy tracks, *Championship Surfer* could have come with classics from Dick Dale, The Lively Ones and modern day surf bands such as Man or Astroman or The Mermen. Instead the music is an appallingly synthesised bastardisation of surf. You can just imagine it playing in the background of a rubbish '60's Hannah-Barbara cartoon, with cardboard cut-out kids having a beach party and dancing.

The usual selection of game modes – head-to-head, stunt mode, championship, arcade – are introduced by a shabby interface and never quite capture the imagination. The learning curve is quite steep and involves falling off your board as you try to stand on it for the first couple of hours. Once you start learning the tricks it doesn't really get any more exciting. There's no feeling of exhilaration – so important in extreme sport simulations – to the point that it might as well be a rope-skipping sim. The below-par graphics don't help either.

The developers should know what they're doing since they're Australian, but perhaps they spent all day cruising waves, smoking joints and eating Tim Tams instead of coming up with a good game.

This is the most advanced surfing simulation ever made for the PC, but then again there are hardly that many of them, are there? You'd still be better off getting an emulator and playing *California Games*.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** That just about does it

PCZVERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** You can surf
⬇ **DOWNERS** It's nothing like the real thing • Appalling music

33 Endless bummer

ONLINEZONE

PC GAMING FOR THE MASSES

PLAY GAMES ONLINE

Thousands of people play these games online.
Find out how to join them in the first part of our massive feature

TESTED

JUMPGATE

The world's first online
space trading game

REVIEWED

DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR

How Novalogic's chart-topper plays online

WIN!
ADSL FREE FOR A YEAR
WORTH OVER £2,500

PLUS! SHATTERED GALAXY · THE SIMS ONLINE
· INFANTRY · DAY OF DEFEAT · WARHAMMER ONLINE

WELCOME TO OZ

✪ **DIALLING IN** Richie Shoemaker

Like most people on *PC ZONE*, I've had to learn the hard way about how PCs work, upgrading them and getting games to run on the damn things, and after ten years I still have a lot to learn. The same is true of online gaming. In a way playing games online is almost like playing on a different platform, you have to worry about new hardware, play games in a different way and get used to bizarre terminology. The learning process is ongoing, but with *ONLINE ZONE* we hope to give you a head start. Both this issue and next we're running a guide to getting online, from connecting to the Net, all the way to playing a game of *Counter-Strike* or *EverQuest*.

For those of you already online, we want to point you in the direction of the games that matter. Every month we'll have news of the latest announcements, previews and test reports of games both near and far. You may even notice reviews of games rated in previous issues of *PC ZONE*, where we'll be looking at the multiplayer side of the game only.

Finally, we'll round up all the latest and greatest add-ons from mod developers. They're the people who team up to create – just for the love of it – free expansions to complement established games, and, where possible, we'll put them on the CD, therefore saving you the bother of downloading and giving you more time to the play the games that matter.

So, what are you waiting for? Go, go, go!

Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

CONTENTS

HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main *PC ZONE* reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.

VERDICT	☑
●●●●●	Excellent
●●●●○	Very good
●●●○○	Decent
●●○○○	Not bad
●○○○○	Bad

THE END OF

It looks like it's all over for BarrysWorld. Hold onto your wallets, reports *Phil Wand*, because it's true what they say: there's no such thing as a free lunch

With investors unwilling to buy it a bigger paddle, BarrysWorld has found itself fighting its way up the proverbial creek. By the time you read this, 300 game servers will have vanished, and the 300,000 marines, heavy weapon guys, tribesmen, terrorists and counter-terrorists who called them home will have been dispossessed. Innumerable leagues, ladders, clan matches, competitions and assorted tournaments will also cease to exist, along with a website that, at its peak, dished out more than five million pages to eager players every month. In short: what was arguably the UK's largest gaming community has disappeared into the ether.

News of the capsize of the online gaming supremo appeared around the globe, everywhere from the BBC to the *Wall Street Journal*, with most sources blaming the infamous dotcom crash that is currently gobbling up online businesses. The day of reckoning for Internet commerce has been swift and cruel, with countless companies axing jobs, closing operations and facing liquidation. Gameplay recently cut 275 jobs and shut all its stores, and Amazon.com announced it was making 1,300 of its staff redundant. Even so, analysts have reported that online entertainment and games communities are one of the few areas likely to survive and generate revenue, despite the outlook for Internet business in general being bleak. So what exactly has happened?

WHO WERE BARRYSWORLD?

Back in 1997, when most of you would have attempted to dial an IP address rather than type it, a little-known *Quake* clan called Fluffy built a dedicated *Quake* server and hooked it up to the Internet. Called Fred's House, it attracted a great deal of attention from the embryonic online community in the UK, and soon after was moved to a connection that could better accommodate the large number of players. As the new system became host to more and more matches, Fluffy members decided to form a new clan, Tortured Souls, with the aim of providing a rack of TS servers that were dedicated to providing the smoothest play. Having gained huge popularity with the gamers who used them, BarrysWorld came into being on February 10, 1998.

Named after Barry, the talkative time sprout in Robert Rankin novels, BarrysWorld grew to encompass a large number of services, ranging from IRC chat channels to dedicated hardware

Perhaps the best gaming website for sim fans, Combatsim.com recently had to start charging its users. Expect more sites to follow suit.
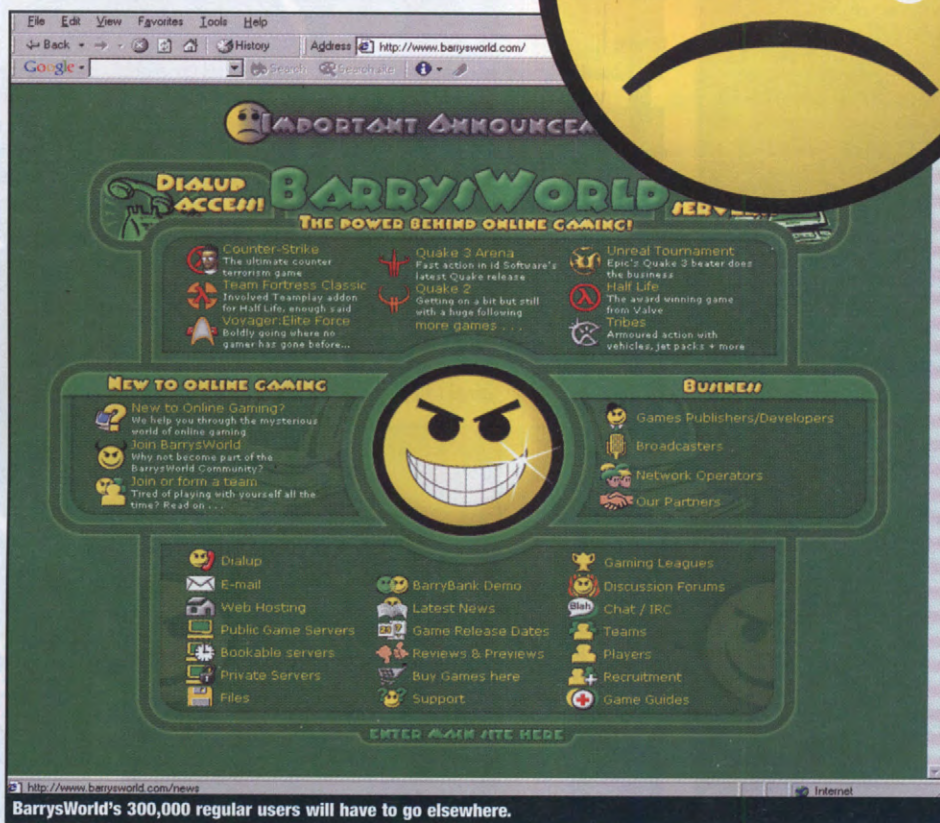
BARRYSWORLD
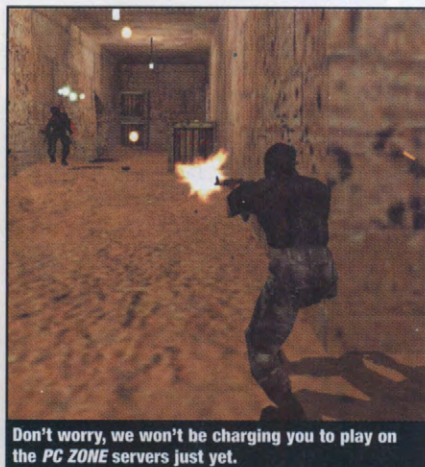
Don't worry, we won't be charging you to play on the *PC ZONE* servers just yet.

'Well, at least they finished their Giants review before they went tits up.'
It was to be their last.

BarrysWorld's 300,000 regular users will have to go elsewhere.

for gaming leagues. In 1998 its then hosts, BusinessNet, who had provided free hosting and free BarryDial 0845 dial-ups for the emerging community, was taken over by Level 3 Communications. To this day, Level 3 is doing its best to keep BW on the air.

1999 saw substantial hardware loans from Cisco Systems, a large American corporation with US$19 billion yearly revenues, and a £1m investment from 3i Group Plc, Europe's leading venture capital company, with a promise of a further £1m at a later but undisclosed time.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Like many online businesses, BarrysWorld revenues were derived from different areas, some from 0845 dial-ups, but with the majority coming from advertising and marketing deals. Since spring last year, investors have no longer seemed willing to stake a claim in organisations that derive the majority of their income from advertising. Big agencies have started backing off from the web, and click-through rates – how many

people respond to banner ads – are dropping away alarmingly. Long gone are the days when entrepreneurs could score multimillion pound funding simply by saying they were "going to do e-commerce", because commerce means *making* money, not spending it. At the time of its demise, and despite the size of the community surrounding it, BarrysWorld lacked viability. The founders' roots and core ideas were in free-for-all gaming, with commercial practicalities simply being an afterthought. And so the second round of £1m funding never emerged.

"Although BarrysWorld has practised exemplary cost control, the state of the investment market makes it impossible to continue to develop the huge potential of this business in its current form," says Ade Brownlow, CEO at BarrysWorld.

Terry Brown from the rival Games-World.net, which hosts the ten *PC ZONE* servers, says: "It's a shame, of course, because its fan base was as loyal as it was large. It's also shaken confidence in the

whole industry." When asked for his opinion on why they went out of business, he comments: "BarrysWorld went from being a free ISP making not a lot, to a commercial provider with millions of pounds invested in it making not a lot." He continues: "Third-party investors want to see a return on what they've put in. Throwing large amounts of money

> 66 **BarrysWorld went from being a free ISP making not a lot, to a commercial provider with millions of pounds invested in it making not a lot** 99

down a wishing well without waiting for the plop at the bottom just doesn't make sense."

THE WAY FORWARD

High advertising spend and 35 staff pulled in a large number of eager punters, but if punters don't contribute to the running of the business – salaries are one thing, Internet connectivity and hardware costs are another – you're going to come a cropper sooner or later. "Games servers don't pay for themselves," says TedTheDog, alter

ego of Ben Lawton at BarrysWorld. "Subscription models and charging is the answer." It was just this kind of payment system that BW investigated before the plug was pulled, and with this in mind, you should expect to pay for your games sooner or later – sooner being more likely than later.

It doesn't take much searching to find companies that have already switched to this way of working. "What do you get when you combine a non-existent banner advertising revenue stream and a dotcom meltdown on the Nasdaq? Serious financial difficulties," moans Douglas Helmer, owner of Combatsim.com, which is ranked in the top 100 of global games sites. "But the way out is simple. If people want to read articles on the site or participate in the forums, they will have to buy a US$3.95 monthly subscription." Our advice: get used to it.

THE SIMS ONLINE

More on the online sequel to the offline phenomenon

The incredible success of last year's The Sims and the subsequent add-on *Livin' Large* has prompted creator Will Wright not only to pen a second expansion, but an online sequel as well. Already *The Sims'* online presence is huge, with the official site (thesims.ea.com), plus hundreds of fan sites offering downloads of every conceivable type, from the hilarious to the filthy. All this of course becomes even more impressive when you remember *The Sims* is without any multiplayer options whatsoever. Pretty good going.

Graphically *The Sims Online* will remain almost identical to the current title, with all of the content, plus much of the third-party stuff being transferred into the online game. Already *The Sims* community is one of the most active and numerous for any game, and for these people to move into the same neighbourhood and set up business is frankly worrying. More than setting up clothes shops, tattoo parlours and newsagents, entrepreneurial types will be able to go as far as setting up nightclubs, sports stadia or even huge amusement parks. Our biggest hope is that we'll be able to take our offline characters online as is the plan with *Black & White's* Gathering feature. When it arrives is another question entirely.

It's that Martin Korda again.

This next song goes out to all the ladies in the house.

Online love in *The Sims*. Scary.

WARZONE ONLINE

Real-time strategy from way oop north

Tenuous link this, but the developers of *Warzone Online* hail from the same part of the world – Sweden if you must know – as the people who made *Europa Universalis* (reviewed on page 68). Apart from that, the two games are worlds apart. (Writer's block is a cruel disease).

Based on the two million-selling tabletop battle game *Mutant Chronicles: Warzone*, *Warzone Online* is a 3D real-time strategy game set 1500 years from now, where players fight with and against huge mega-corporations. More squad-based tactical action than straight drag-and-drop strategy, *Warzone* already looks quite something with over 300 unit-types planned and six races to choose from. We've yet to hear details of a publisher or a release date, but our ferrets are already digging and as soon as we hear more we'll let you know. Do your own digging at www.paradoxplaza.com/wzo.asp

Never seen a leaf-blower like this before... where's the on switch then?

NGUK

hardware & software

NETG

NEWS GAMES 0800-SIGNUP SERVICES

HOME

GAMES

NGUK

games servers
353 players
on 168 ports

Our games servers lead the UK's entry into online gaming technologies resulting in cutting edge gameplay.

Our ports had a total of 353 players at 17.05 GMT

| n/a | Clusterball |
| 8 | Deus Ex |

WHAT'S A GISP...?

Here's a clue: it'll cost you £25 a month

With free ISPs dropping like flies, it seems paying to play games like *Quake III* and *Counter-Strike* is set to become the norm after NetGames UK (www.nguk.net) announced its service. Costing £25 a month, NetGames UK is calling itself the first 'GISP' (that's Gaming Internet Service Provider), for which subscribers get unlimited Internet access via an 0800 number, plus access to public and private – rather nippy – NetGames servers.

The catch is that after three hours, surfers will be cut off, which may be better than two-hour limits set by other ISPs, but for an extra tenner it seems a bit harsh. Anyway, if you're interested, check it out.
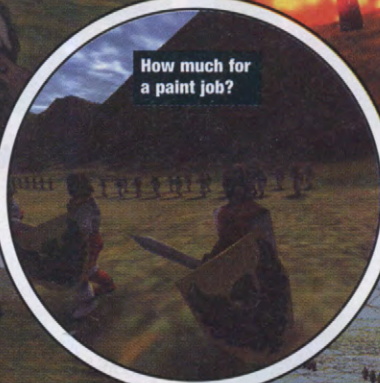
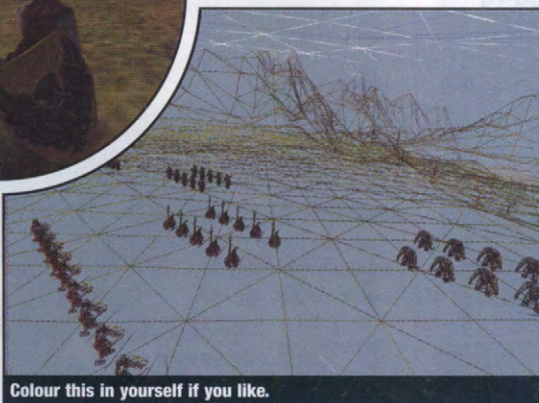Skaven has infravision don't y'know?

How much for a paint job?

Night and day battles are planned.

We're still more than a year away from release.

Colour this in yourself if you like.

WARHAMMER ONLINE

The paint's still wet on these first screenshots

G ames Workshop has created some cracking tabletop war games in its time, but on PC, apart from *Space Hulk*, few games have come close to their tabletop counterparts. Nottingham's Climax Studios, now partners with GW, is looking to buck the trend with *Warhammer Online*, a multiplayer strategy game that not only boasts graphics on a par with the best, but gameplay to match Games Workshop's enduring fantasy battle system.

We're still some way off until the game is anywhere near finished –

probably not until well into next year – but already the game engine is making a mark. Climax promises an interface so simple that a chimp could grasp it. For example, a player's resources will be displayed in-game as a graphic rather than by displaying a number; visit your stores and see 50 sacks of grain piled up. Apart from the battles themselves, espionage, diplomacy, troop management and trade will form a central focus and players may eventually rise from local warlord to Emperor of the known world. Unlikely perhaps, but not impossible.

What excites us (those of us who have actually played *Warhammer*) is the prospect of being able to customise banners and shields in-game rather than buying expensive paint and spending hours spilling it over the carpet. Add to that the fact that *Warhammer*'s co-creator Rick Priestley is heavily involved in the game's development and we should be on course for one hell of a fight – and whatever the cost, it should be far cheaper than the real thing. Check out www.climax.co.uk and www.games-workshop.co.uk.

COMPETITION

WIN FIVE COPIES OF EVERQUEST: DELUXE EDITION

Slip on that leather jerkin and throw away your shaving foam – *EverQuest* is coming once again, this time in a Deluxe Edition, featuring not only the original game but both *The Ruins Of Kunark* – last year's add-on – and *Scars Of Velious* (reviewed only last issue).

And it gets better. Inside the box will be a poster (probably of a female goblin "gaining experience" with a barbarian), a map of the entire *EverQuest* world, a strategy guide and a figurine. Coo.

Best of all, we have five copies of the game to give away, plus contents and a deluxe air-cushioned jiffy bag.

All you have to do is scour the Internet and email us a picture of a beard. It can be any colour or shape, but it must be attached to a face. The five bestest most funny beardy pics earn their discoverers a copy of the game. Just send your emails to onlineeditor@pczone.co.uk before midnight on Wednesday April 4, and you could find yourself growing a fine set of whiskers yourself.

✪ Terms and conditions: Only entries completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. Chris Anderson is not allowed to enter.

EVERY DAY IS LIKE

The football management game has finally blossomed onto the Internet. *Mark Hill* assesses the newcomer's prospects

t was bound to happen. We are a nation of tacticians and transfer masterminds, obsessed with back-page club scandals, teletext updates, fantasy leagues and *Championship Manager*. It was only a matter of time before online games started pitching armchair managers against each other. Most of them are still in the throes of beta testing or just beginning to go live, but
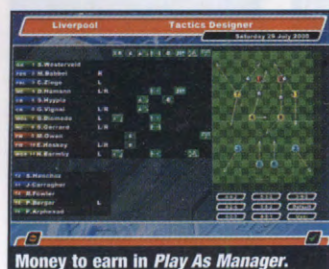

***Internet Football Club*: don't expect dozens of detailed player stats.**

***Sunday League*: for people who spend hours reading children's teletext.**
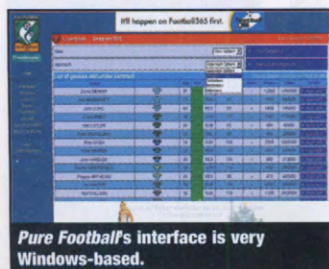
***Pure Football*'s interface is very Windows-based.**

Money to earn in *Play As Manager*.

it's already clear where each one is heading.

Very much aiming for the casual online manager, Rage's *Internet Football Club* (**www.internetfootballclub. com**) offers a dynamic fantasy league, where you name your own team. There are no real players, so a lot of time at the beginning of a season will be spent getting to know your squad and figuring who to put in your team, assessing weak areas and delving into the transfer market. The stats are kept to a minimum and players will usually only have one high stat for their position, marked out of five stars. The browser-based interface is colourful, using Flash without being too tacky, and the presentation is easy on the eye. Tactics are surprisingly in-depth and address the main problem facing an online management game – primarily the fact that you can't change tactics during a match in response to the way things are going.

Casual too is *Sunday League* (**www.sundayleague.com**). Sporting cartoonish visuals and *Beano* humour, it is quite obviously aimed primarily at children, although younger ones will

> *Will EA's FIFA money-raker ever go online? OK, stupid question.*

probably get lost among all the different screens. There's little depth and anyone over the age of 11 will have problems finding the refs' names or the jokes page even slightly amusing. One of the better jokes on offer being: what do footballers drink? Penaltea. Hilarious.

Players become unavailable not because of injury but because of 'choir practice', while their true professions are things such as 'donkey tamer' and 'egg peeler'.

At least *Sunday League* allows you to change almost all of this information, so you can choose to have all the real players from your favourite team or make them as offensive as you wish. Just remember that it's aimed at your kids or your younger brother, not the *Champ Man* fanatic.

On the surface, *Pure Football* (**http://purefootball.freeloader. com**) is similar to *Internet Football Club*, with the same use of pleasant colours and easy-to-navigate interface. The biggest difference

is that *PF* has real teams and real players, making it a prime contender for all the serious managers out there. It features 25 attributes per player although, like in *Champ Man*, not all of them are visible. Each season is a world in itself, and there is no continuous world with relegations and really slow team-building over a period of game years.

There are currently only two leagues featured (the English Premiership and European Superleague), but there are plans to include them all eventually.

THE BIG BOYS

Anco has years of experience with its *Player Manager* series and its online version, *Play As Manager*

Play As Manager: seeing real players in motion could make all the difference.

SATURDAY

SPECIAL REPORT

(www.ukbeta.playasmanager.com) has a trump card that will turn many gamers to its cause: 3D matches. Coming in a series of surprisingly small downloads, the match highlights make for much more entertaining and exciting results than just clicking on a button and seeing the final score, with a bunch of text at the bottom telling you what happened. It also features real teams, players and an international transfer system.

Purists will scoff at the fact that it has 3D graphics at all and some might be put off by the fact that you need to pay in order to play. But to make up for it there is serious money behind the game and plenty of prizes to be won when the game goes live at the end of the summer.

SoccerSim (www.soccersim.com) is by far the closest approximation to Championship Manager of the lot. You can choose to manage any team in Europe or, rather, you can choose to apply for a job at any team. Competition for jobs at the top clubs is fierce at the start of the season and you'll probably end up managing a

Macedonian team if you don't knock on as many doors as possible. The front end is pretty simplistic, but behind there is a wealth of options and depth not usually seen outside Champ Man. There are loads of stats, tactical choices, a good transfer system, a full complement of staff, details of facilities

and even a daily newspaper who might interview you at any stage. The major failing at beta stage is that it hasn't yet incorporated real-life players, but we've been promised realistic stats for all of them. When that happens, Soccersim won't have any problems towering over the competition.

Guide your favourite team to the top in Soccersim. If they'll hire you.

NEW LOOK WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK

Yes, the rumours are true, the world's best website for PC gamers has finally had a nip and a tuck

As it's coming up to its 4th birthday, we thought it was high time our venerable website had a makeover – just in time for our 100th issue. As has always been the case www.pczone.co.uk includes a comprehensive previews and reviews database, in-depth news on a daily basis and all the latest demos, patches, mods and hardware drivers as and when they are released.

New to the site is live chat, where PC ZONE readers can get together in real time. The PC ZONE crew will also drop by for a chat – Counter-Strike and deadlines permitting – and if we don't

see you there, you can bet we'll be hitting the other chat forums on a regular basis. If you don't fancy getting so up-close, go to Mailbox and send us an email direct.

If that isn't enough, we now have a full list of UK release dates for all the up-and-coming PC games hitting the shelves.

As usual www.pczone.co.uk will be updated daily and as time goes by we'll be adding more new features. Check it out, see what you think and, as always, feel free to tell us your thoughts about it.

Childish? Us? Never!

We've got more downloads than any other UK games site.

Missed an issue? Check out our old reviews and save yourself some money.

Space is the place
JUMPGATE

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The first decent stab at multiplayer *Elite*
- Unrivalled player community
- Initially simplistic, but with plenty of depth under the surface
- Already a highly polished game

BETA TEST

The get-up Richie traded in his leathers and dragon staff for.

Captain *Richie Shoemaker* tries his hand online

So there I was chopping trees to build up my strength, in order +- that I could defeat a rabbit that had been terrorising me, when a kindly stranger appeared. The conversation was hardly riveting but being the sort of fellow I am I couldn't help but be pleasant. Then, without so much as an insult or provocation, my new friend turned on me. Before I could raise my hatchet, my limbs were off, my most prized possessions taken and the rest, along with my fleshy nuggets, left scattered across the leafy glade. As an unseen ghost floating above the debris I couldn't help but feel that a wrong had been done, a warrior deprived of his rightful glory – a rabbit cheated out of a good kill.

Needless to say that after what had been a tedious month up until then, I never returned to the world of *Ultima Online*. Just as well I

think, for had I been chopping wood any longer I may well have been tempted to move on to bigger and better things and become, like the otherwise amiable Chris Anderson, an *EverQuest* bore.

As it happens *Jumpgate* has taken over and I find the depths of space a far more interesting place to be. Of course it helps that the few hundred regular beta testers of what is the first true online sci-fi RPG are a far friendlier bunch than those from my dark goblin days.

Here in a fractious universe, governed loosely by the TRI (The Reconstruction Initiative), even the pirates are pretty friendly. On those occasions when the squads from Solrain, Octavius and Quantar (or mixtures thereof) do get it on, the conflicts are short-lived tit-for-tat affairs. However, such fragile peace is sure to end when later this year *Jumpgate* passes its final test stages and people start having to pay a

Captain Shoemaker – the most cowardly pirate in the galaxy.

monthly fee to play. As we all know, once you start investing money as well as time into a game, the stakes get that much higher.

PILLARS OF FAITH

At the moment, with about ten hours of flying time under my belt, I'm trying to earn my way to becoming a level 3 Solrain pilot. A hi-tech trading nation, Solrainians are by a nose the most popular choice for *Jumpgate* players.

If you don't keep your eyes open you'll slam right into an asteroid.

Different asteroids yield different commodities, these are packed with ice.

In space everything is green – apparently.

Plot your course across the 3D map.

If you buy better weapons for your ship, make sure you have enough energy to fire them.

Keep inside the green circles to dock with the station.

Octavians – warlike nomads – and Quantars – hippy miners – are roughly neck-and-neck in the popularity stakes. In my cramped hold is a small package destined for The Great Pillars, five jumps away deep in a sector held by the Octavians. Though I personally have no quarrel with them, JOSSH (*Jumpgate*'s news portal jumpgate.mightygames.com) informs me our two star nations have been scrapping, and with an Octavian ship buzzing about at the edge of my radar, I should at least keep an eye open for trouble. Happily, I can report the ship turns out to be mining asteroids – a lucrative trade if you have the right equipment – so after breathing a sigh of relief, I cut the power to my engines, ready to manoeuvre into a jumpgate bound for the next sector.

Which is where things go wrong. Halfway to the next gate a Conflux (nasty alien type) ship appears to

attack and near my destination, like a twat I plough into a relay beacon. Luckily I was insured and after a few seconds I emerge reborn with a new ship and body, back at the station where I started.

THE OLD BILL

Minor setbacks aside I'm thoroughly enjoying *Jumpgate*, big fan of space sims that I am. I find the sense of community both welcoming and formidable – other players are generally helpful and the official news and fan sites help to perpetuate the story and conflicts played out in the game. There is tremendous chivalry and fierce loyalty on the EU server – a credit both to the creators and players of the game.

Certainly *Jumpgate* would benefit from a greater range of ships to fly. At the moment there are only four per faction, ranging from a scout to a small freighter, and although I imagine I'd have to play for many months to afford my

"Role-playing and trading are central to progress through the ranks, as is effective teamwork"

be heading my way. Worse, the Octavian miner appears from the gate behind.

Though a small ship, I have no combat experience to deal with the Conflux threat and if the Octavian can afford mining equipment he's obviously been around longer than me. It doesn't help that in the *Jumpgate* universe, ships are far harder to fly than in *FreeSpace* (though, I'm happy to add, far easier to master than in *I-War* or *Allegiance*). As usual I found I was pooing my pants for no reason: my Octavian pursuer – a German fellow – seems quite happy to steam in on my behalf while I make a dash for the next sector. I get to survive cargo intact, he gains combat experience and – I discover later – a medal from TRI. A good trade. Five minutes later, safe from

own Battlestar Galactica, if there were something like it I may well stick around. AI or player-controlled police ships would also be helpful, if only as a career option for new players to help them band together before retiring into a life of trading, piracy or bounty hunting.

Whether or not such upgrades make it into the game, *Jumpgate* is remarkably complete as it stands, with many hidden depths rippling under what most would see as a simple mission-based online game. Role-playing and trading are central to progress through the ranks, as is effective teamwork. At the moment it is perhaps too safe a place to live an online existence, but it's early days yet. Hopefully my old friend from *Ultima Online* will pay me a visit. A rabbit friend of mine has a few scores to settle. **PCZ**

Looking for some intergalactic action.

Capturing an enemy's PoC could swing the whole game.

And 10 million ligh years from the nearest RAC van.

Somewhere in this mess are your babies.

Make sure you remember to defend your own Points of Control.

SHATTERED GALAXY

It's not really news to us that *Rhianna Pratchett* is on another planet

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Nexon Studios
PUBLISHER Nexon Studios
WEBSITE www.shatteredgalaxy.com
OUT TBC

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- 50+ players in one battle
- Highly addictive
- Character and units develop with each battle
- Related fan sites
  www.shatteredgalaxy.org and
  www.planetsg.net

I t's the usual sci-fi fare. Mysterious artefact found, scientists baffled, turns out to be some kind of alien transport device. Jodie Foster is too expensive to hire, so Russell the rat is chosen to be the first inter-galactic explorer. Off goes Russell and 'whoops' most of the earth is transported with him and slapped down in the middle of the alien planet, named Morgana IV. 70 per cent of Earth's reluctant travellers have died during the trip

and the remaining 30 per cent are battling it out between themselves and the local inhabitants for control of the planet. This is where you and *Shattered Galaxy* come in.

This particular massively multiplayer RTS comes courtesy of Nexon Studios, creators of *Nexus TK* and *Dark Ages*, and follows in same tradition of valuing challenging gameplay over flashy graphics. The game is in its public beta-testing stage at the moment, so anyone can download the 64Mb client and join the battle. It's relatively simple to get started: you create your hero, their name, faction and appearance. You also start with a few stats to play around with and these will increase after a few good battles. 'Tactics' relates to how many units you can control in a battle. You start of with a band of six units, chosen from infantry, mobile units, aviation and specialists, and this number can increase to ten for experts. This doesn't sound a lot for an RTS, but the number of upgrades and equipment available for your units

makes them function much more like a *Baldur's Gate*-style RPG party.

'Clout' determines the quality of your basic unit and chassis, 'Education' relates to weapons and advances, and 'Mechanical Aptitude' gives you access to all the fun stuff and enables you to customise your units with more gadgets than a Bond film. It's wise to leave your settings on default until you get

your faction commander (the player with the highest Tactics rating) to accept you into the battle zone. Acceptance will depend on how full the battle is and presumably the commander's mood. Victory is based on a King Of The Hill type system wherein your mission is to capture and hold the enemy's PoC (Points of Control) and at the same time defend your own.

❝Where the game excels is in its dynamic, addictive multiplayer system, combining solid strategy with elements of successful online RPGs like *Diablo II*❞

to know your units' capability and establish a battle style.

There's a relatively small single-player section, which functions as both a tutorial and a way of allowing you to build up some experience points before you get to the juicy bits. When you feel in need of some serious action you can bring up a map that shows you every battle happening on the planet. You'll need to get authorisation from

Although visually *SG* is a cut above its Nexon predecessors, it's still a basic 2D environment, rather like a sub-standard *Starcraft*, so don't expect anything too pretty. However, where the game does excel is in its dynamic and addictive multiplayer system, combining solid strategy with elements of successful online RPGs such as *Diablo II*, making it a gem for all dedicated RTS fans. **PCZ**

INFANTRY

A team-based arcade blast aimed at fans of first-person shooters and real-time strategy games.
Phil Wand investigates

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Harmless Games
PUBLISHER Sony Online Entertainment
WEBSITE www.station.sony.com/infantry
RELEASE DATE Spring 2001

BETA TEST

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- 150 players per game arena, 200 different weapons
- Choice of vehicles, some can carry team mates
- Different environments and an evolving storyline
- Offline messaging system

Tanks require a driver, gunner and others besides to be effective.

Infantry's main menu is Windows-based and easy to use.

Having been one of GameFan's star attractions when the online gaming hub hit a financial iceberg and sank without a trace last November, *Infantry* was one of the few games to be rescued by Sony Online Entertainment. It currently finds itself taking a backward step into beta stage, but with top crowd-pullers *EverQuest*, *Tanarus* and *Star Wars Galaxies* as next door neighbours, it could prove to be one of Sony's more popular titles.

The first hurdle *Infantry* has to clear is that it looks drab and uninteresting, apparently having been put together using every previous game in the genre as a template. You'd get the same feeling looking at a Mitsubishi Carisma, listening to a Westlife track, or watching a film with Steven Seagal

> **Whether Infantry has the power to make it big is not clear, as it depends a great deal on the support Sony offers it**

in it. Sure, there are lots of weapons, but as with games such as *Unreal Tournament*, players tend to home in on the effective ones (the remainder relegated to backup for when the preferred firearm runs out of ammo). Yes, the maps are huge, but as demonstrated by *Quake: Team Arena*, all you do is spend a lot of time trudging about with a numb index finger. And as for multiman vehicles, *Tribes* players have been jumping on board LPCs and HPCs since, oh, goodness knows when.

So what exactly has *Infantry* got on offer? Answer: *something*, but we don't quite know what. Maybe it's the slick, simple graphics and camaraderie of team-based games that rescue it from obscurity. Perhaps it's the fact that the huge, lumbering battle tanks require five cohorts and four passengers before they're effective in battle, each occupant performing a unique task while on the move. It might be the class system, which allows a much wider choice of playing styles and boosts the strategic nature of the game, or it could just be that the game is currently in beta, and thus free to download. But enthusiasm may wane when Sony pump it up to Premium status and begin charging on a pay-per-play basis – which is what we predict will happen.

The game itself is best described as a third-person shooter – much like *Diablo* or *Nox Quest*, albeit with a 'flattened' view of the universe courtesy of a 2D graphics engine. It borrows the top-down aspects of real-time strategy classic *StarCraft*, combining it with in-yer-face, aggressive, class-based elements from *Team Fortress Classic*. The result is fast and furious gameplay in any one of four variations: Skirmish, Ambush, Capture The Flag, Team Deathmatch and GravBall. Skirmish is by far the most popular, accounting for between 80 to 90 per cent of all *Infantry* players; Team Deathmatch nobody seems to bother with at all, presumably because tactically it offers nothing new – in fact it offers nothing, period.

Whether *Infantry* has the power to make it big is not clear, as it depends a great deal on the support Sony offers it. If the galaxy-sized user base of *EverQuest* is anything to go by, things could be looking good for online arcade/strategy fans. **PCZ**
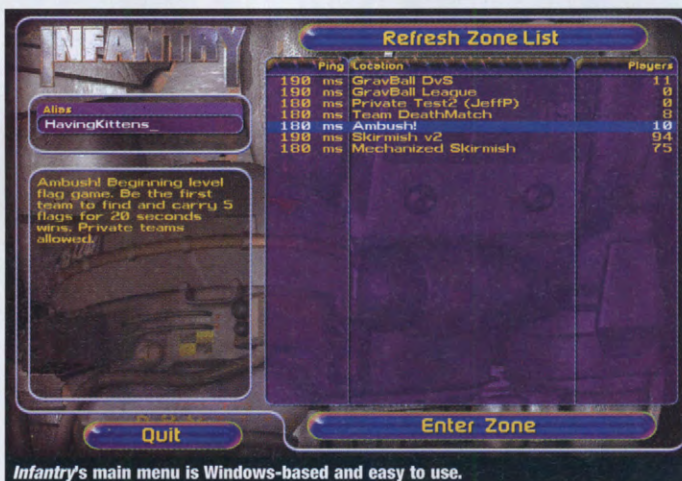
Visually the game is simple but hydraulically smooth.

MechSkirmish is seemingly all tanks, and is great fun.

PLAYING

There are over 400 million people online all around the globe. Time to hook yourself up to the world's richest gaming environment. Words by *Phil Wand*

Deep breath, repeat after us: *"getting online is not as hard as I think"*. Sure, you'll have your fingers crossed the first time you do it, but from then on it's like riding a bike, and in no time at all you'll be plugging in and dropping out like a real pro.

The one thing that should concern you at this point is *how* you connect to the great digital expanse. There are four options you need to consider when thinking about this: modem, ISDN, cable and ADSL. But having the right kit is only half the story, like having a car but no driver's licence. You need an Internet Service Provider, or ISP, to put the hardware to use by providing the final link between it and cyberspace. Choosing the right combination depends on what's right for you, both of which ultimately depend on how much time you want to spend online (playing games or otherwise), how much money you can afford, and what's available in your local area.

MODEM LOVE

The modem is the oldest, most widespread, cheapest and, ultimately, slowest way of getting connected to the Internet – perfect for those on a budget, puzzle and strategy gamers and irregular online players. It's also the only realistic choice available to

Team Fortress 2 – it's gonna be big.

100,000 people play *EverQuest* every month.

ONLINE

WWII *Online* – the invasion begins this summer.

Massively multiplayer games like *EverQuest* are becoming increasingly popular and accessible.

those beyond the coverage of ADSL and cable. Using regular phone lines and available for about £40, a modem doesn't mean you won't get a good game in: a decent brand and a good ISP can help hide its deficiencies. Choose a 56kbps (kilobytes per second) modem conforming to the V.90 standard, and avoid anything that says HSB or Winmodem on the box.

Of course, if you've just acquired a new PC, chances are you've already got a modem inside, though it might be crap. It's worth mentioning here that there's a bewildering array of ISPs

eager for you to sign up to their services, and if ease of use is more important to you than speed, AOL and CompuServe disks can be found taped to magazine covers, and in High Street shops you'll find ISP software from FreeServe and others like it. Some will be free (ie you'll only be charged for local calls, 1p per minute off-peak), others like BTinternet will offer free calls, in which case you'll need to pay a flat monthly fee of up to £20. You may find the odd completely

free ISP still in business, and although tempting, our experience is that their network speeds aren't anything to write home about. The good news is that you can change your ISP whenever you want, so try a few and pick the best.

> **Cable is ideal for those long, through-the-night thrashes at *Counter-Strike* and for Napster sessions, as you don't have to pay any usage charges**

AN OFFICE AFFAIR
Another option is ISDN, or Integrated Services Digital Network, typically suited to small office networks but in the last couple of years increasingly adopted by home users – until ADSL came along that is. ISDN provides between 64kpbs and 128kpbs

connection rates, depending on how you set it up. You can use two 64kbps digital lines bonded to form one 128kbps channel, one channel plus a regular analogue phone line, or two analogue phone lines. It was heralded as the next big thing for Internet users, but prohibitive call and setup

charges meant that few home users got excited by it.

However, over the last couple of years, BT has released various Highway products, essentially ISDN lines but at more approachable prices. Remember though, that to use this form of connection you'll

Dedicated games servers like Wireplay are a handy resource.

Sites like www.zone.com have loads of free online games to play.

need to order a £50 ISDN line first, and as well as having to have someone rummaging around inside your PC, your pick of ISPs will be limited and your online costs set at a flat rate. If you already have a digital line installed, it may be best to stick with it for the time being.

PLAIN CABLING

Cable modems use the expanding cable TV network to plug users into the Internet and, as with ADSL, they're permanently connected. Cable companies often claim that their modems are 100 times faster than a standard 56kbps modem, as they have a potential of reaching 5Mbps (megabits per second), but in real world situations it's more likely to be throttled down by the cable provider to between 512kbps and 1Mbps, or about 60Kb of data arriving every second. Cable is ideal for those long, through-the-night thrashes at *Counter-Strike* and for Napster sessions, as you don't have to pay any usage charges. You log on, get going, and if you want to, never log back off again.

One of the best deals around at the moment is from cabling supremo Telewest. Unlike rival packages from NTL (www.ntl.com) and British Telecom, Telewest's Internet offshoot Blueyonder won't cut you off after periods of inactivity, which as online gamers will know, is something of a harsh punishment – not to mention plain rude. Therefore, no matter what method of connection you choose, if online gaming is your aim, look for an ISP happy for you to stay online as long as you want.

The only downside to cable connections is that you need a network card in your machine (about £30) to connect your PC to the cable modem.

HERE AT LAST

Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, ADSL, is always on, just like cable. It means that if you want to check your mail, surf the web or play a game, there's no dialling up or cursing at busy signals. It also won't clog up your existing telephone line, meaning Mum can still phone Auntie Mavis in Camberley without kicking you off a game of *Nox Quest*. ADSL gives faster downloads than uploads – hence "Asymmetric", meaning lopsided. Currently, British Telecom's BTopenworld ADSL package offers 500kbps downloads and 256kbps uploads. While that's artificially limited (the technology is capable of much more), if you're used to a 56k modem, such speeds will still be a revelation.

All the reports we've seen point to the fact that the ADSL service is second to none, with BT providing an unusually high level of service, despite being way behind schedule in getting the product installed nationwide. With BTopenworld you also get 10Mb of disk space for web documents, and ten email addresses included with the package. If you're into big downloads, streaming audio and video or long *Quake* sessions, it's the only way to go. The problem for most people is that you need to be in specific areas before BT will sign you up. Check out its website at www.btopenworld.com to see if your exchange is ADSL enabled (and send us a postcard if it is). Other ADSL services being rolled out include SupaNet

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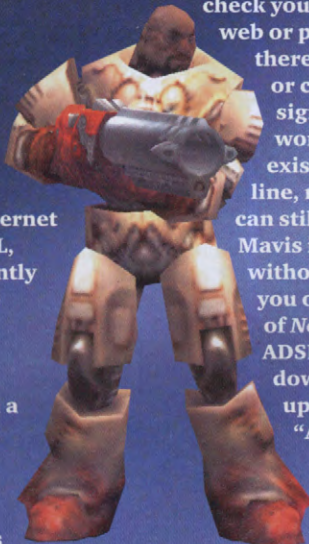
HARDWARE

HARD CHOICES

Choosing the kit that's right for you

MODEM

COST: A modem will cost you £40, ISP costs vary greatly.
REQUIRES: A regular phone line.
PROS: Cheap• Take your pick from dozens of ISPs • Uses standard phone connection
CONS: Too slow for action games and painful download speeds • Picking an ISP can be hit and miss
WHAT TO LOOK FOR: Go for an external modem if possible (it means you won't have to go tinkering around in your PC's innards) and make sure it offers up to 56kbps connect speeds at the V.90 standard. Avoid anything that mentions HSB or Winmodem.

➲ Cheap. Fast. Easy to install. Any other questions?

ISDN

COST: ISDN line installation costs vary from £20 to £50, plus you'll need an ISDN card (around £60). ISP costs range from one-off payments of around £50 including unlimited use for around 18 months, to monthly fees of £35 with limited online time.
**REQUIRES:** ISDN card, plus digital/analogue line connection/upgrade
PROS: Cheaper than ADSL • Make phone calls while online • The fastest choice if you're outside ADSL and cable areas
CONS: Old technology • Fast enough, but not fastest • Not every ISP supports 128kbps dual channel connections
WHAT TO LOOK FOR: 128kbps should be the speed you aim for. For an ISDN card, the Teles card may not be the cheapest on offer, but it's widely acclaimed as being a solid, reliable product backed by a large German manufacturer. Check out www.teles.de for more info. For an ISP, try BT's Highway service www.bt.com/homehighway or Intensive Networks' offer at www.intensive.net.

➊ Plug & Play makes this Teles ISDN card a cinch to install.
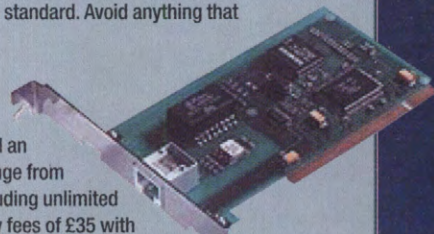
CABLE

COST: Cable costs vary, from an initial setup of £50 upward and then from £20 per month. Blueyonder is offering £33 per month, including rental of a cable modem.
REQUIRES: A 10Base-T compatible network card (about £30), and you have to be in a cable coverage area. If you're not, you're stuffed.
PROS: Genuine 24/7 broadband • Fast and reliable • No timeouts
CONS: You need a network card • Must be in a cable area
WHAT TO LOOK FOR: Check out Blueyonder's website at www.blueyonder.co.uk which provides full details on Telewest's High-speed Internet service, capable of a blistering 512kpbs download speed. Alternatives include NTL at www.ntl.co.uk.

➲ A Surfboard cable modem. Come to daddy...

ADSL

COST: At the moment, most ADSL providers such as BT and FreeServe are sticking to the exact same price tariffs, being £150 setup, plus £39.99 per month thereafter. Those figures include the rental of an ADSL modem.
REQUIRES: A PC with a USB port running Windows 98 or 2000 Professional. While you don't need anything more than a regular copper wire phone line, your local exchange does have to be ADSL enabled. See www.btopenworld.com for full details.
**PROS:** Super fast broadband access • Permanently connected
CONS: Your machine needs a USB port • More costly than cable
WHAT TO LOOK FOR: Most companies offer what are essentially different wrappers around one product. Although BT has been slow to roll out the new technology, reports are excellent and users happy. If you want to go elsewhere, see www.freeserve.com/plus for details of FreeServe's broadband access.

➊ An Alcatel ADSL modem, as supplied to you by BTopenworld.

↑ Get the downloads you want, when you want them.
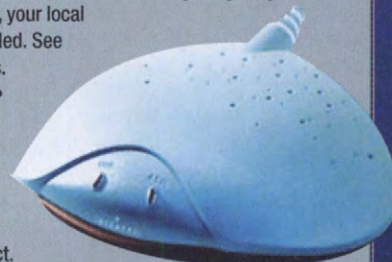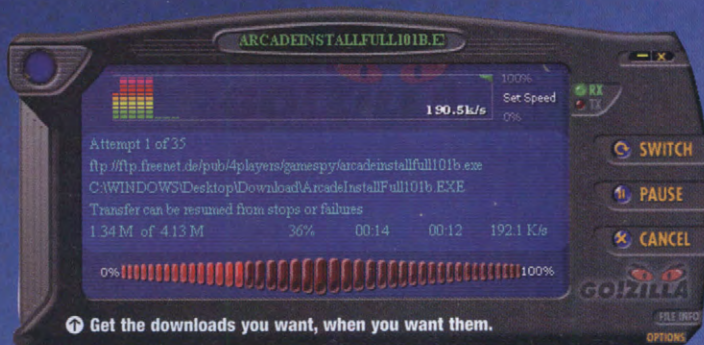
It's not just about fragging.

A modem is fine for puzzle-type games.

(www.supanet.com), Madas afish (www.madasafish.com/dazzlefish), Freeserve (www.freeserve.com/plus) and AOL (www.aol.co.uk). More will follow, you can be sure of that.

HUGE TOOLS

So you've got the hardware, an ISP and with it no doubt, a copy of Internet Explorer and Outlook Express. Aside from your web browser and mail client however, you're going to need a few other tools and utilities in order to get the most from being online.

Pretty much essential – especially if you're connected with a modem – is a download manager. Clicking on a file link within Internet Explorer and watching the status bar creep from left to right really isn't the best use of your time. A download manager should be able to automatically search out a faster server, and then resume the download should anything go wrong. Though there are some fine examples (GetRight – www.getright.com and ReGet – www.reget.com), we think the best download manager is GoZilla (www.gozilla.com). Principally, it watches where you're clicking and leaps to the fore whenever it detects you're grabbing a file. It'll tell you everything you need to know about the server you're downloading from – where it is, how fast it is – and whether there are better alternatives. You'll be able to switch sites at any time, in case everything slows down, and schedule clicks for later. Additionally, GoZilla can virus scan every download, and even search a given web page for all files and then line them up for grabbing.

While we're on the subject of viruses, hackers and general Internet banditry, anti-virus software is without doubt the most important download investment you will make. On the market are plenty of good examples and for value and popularity, we reckon McAfee's software probably edges out the rest (www.mcafee.com). Worth thinking about also, especially if logging on for extended periods, is some

Windows is often smart enough to detect when you're trying to connect to the Internet, modem users are best advised to fire up their dial-ups before attempting to do anything else. This is simply because with today's choked telephone lines, you need to be 100 per cent sure you're connected before starting the game. That's especially true if you're a *Half-Life* player, as on some 3dfx systems the Valve classic is notorious for its

> **"Modern PC games are equally as happy with the concept of being online as your web browser or email client is"**
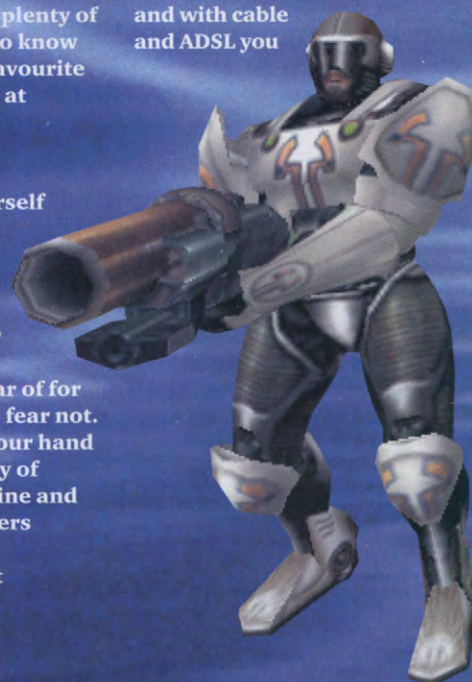
personal firewall software. Simply put, programs such as ZoneAlarm block out anyone trying to get in through the back door of your system and believe us, there are plenty of ways in for those who know where to look. Our favourite freebie can be found at www.zonelabs.com.

GAME ON

Once you've got yourself plumbed in safe and secure, it's time to start clicking all those scary looking Internet multiplayer menus that you've managed to stay clear of for all these years. Well, fear not. We're here to hold your hand as you take your copy of *Quake III: Arena* online and into battle with players unknown…
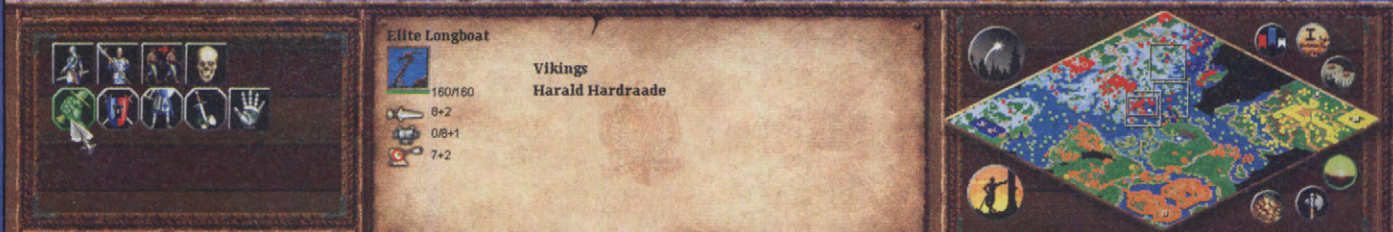
While it's true that

unwillingness to swap to and from the Windows desktop. Of course, if you're using ISDN, the connection process is near instantaneous, and with cable and ADSL you

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FAST CONNECTION `?` `□` `✕`

A MILLION POUNDS PER SECOND

If you've just had all six balls roll into view on the National Lottery, why not consider one of the following very flash methods of connecting to the Internet?

T-1
Data arrives down a 1.5Mbps permanent line, giving gloriously low pings to games servers. If you can't afford the £8,000+ annual charge but want to impress your mates, a little known fact is that your 56k modem is known as a fractional T-1. So go on, get boasting.

E-1
A permanent leased line carrying data at a rate of 2Mbps, and providing both download and upload speeds in excess of 200Kb a second. Note that an E-1 gives more thrust than the North American T-1.

(1.5Mbps) line. Cost: about £20,000 per year, plus initial setup.

T-3
A permanent leased line carrying data at a rate of 45Mbps. Ever fancied downloading the *Counter-Strike* install in two minutes flat? That'll be £16,000+ a month, please.

OC-48
A thumping 2.5Gbps, or about 500 times faster than a home network. You could download all the porn on the Internet in less than half an hour. Actually, no, that's a complete lie, but it made you think, didn't it?

RTS games don't demand the lightning-fast connection needed for your average FPS.

Aggressive Stance (A)

Elite Longboat

Vikings
Harald Hardraade

160/160
8+2
0/8+1
7+2

never have to worry about such matters as you're going to be "always on" anyway. Flash bastard.

FRAG HAPPY

Modern PC games are equally as happy with the concept of being online as your web browser or email client is. That means you won't have to muck about reconfiguring your machine for particular titles; if the game in question has multiplayer options that mention the Internet, online play, or TCP/IP (the 'language' of data on the Internet), you're pretty much set to go. All you need to do now is figure out *where*.

The *Arena* Servers screen shows all the servers currently running

Q3A for the given server category – click to cycle through the 'LAN' and 'Mplayer' options to 'Internet'. Once done, you should see between one and 3,000 servers gradually

WEBSITES [?][X]

WORTH A LOOK

Useful sites for those whose brains need a little more input

www.howstuffworks.com
Does exactly what it says. Just like those Ladybird books from the '70s, only without the paper cuts.

www.net4nowt.com
Needs updating, but a good site, not only for telling you what's what, but who's who as well. Track down ISPs and what they're charging here.

www.download.com
One of the best download sites around. Here you'll find virus software, browsers, firewall software and everything else you could possibly need.

fill the list, with the fastest ones nestling at the top. If you click the 'Show Full' button, you'll see games with no free slots, so for now make sure this is turned off – we only see sessions where there's room to jump in and play.

What next? Well, at this point, we *could* tell you about having to specify IP addresses and port numbers (eek), and

we *might* worry you with the thought of typing lines of weird code into a teeny text box in order to hook up with the server and request a game, but we're not going to. All you have to do is double-click and get fragging. Even your grandma could do it.

⊕ Next month: Finding new (and old) games to play, online etiquette and how to get the most from your online setup.

ARENA SERVERS

Servers: Internet ⊕
Game Type: All
Sort By: Ping Time
Show Full: ● on
Show Empty: ● on

PC ZONE (UK) QUAKE 3 Q3DM16	16/16	DM	UDP	38
NETGAMES-UK.NET - SA CCTF1	0/15	cctf	UDP	38
NETGAMES-UK.NET ROCK RA3MAP5	0/11	arena	UDP	38
-*> EXINFERIS <*- R RA3MAP2	0/16	arena	UDP	45
-* WWW.GAMERSHUT.DE Q3TOURNEY4	2/ 4	osp	UDP	45
-* WWW.GAMERSHUT.DE RA3MAP7	2/15	arena	UDP	45
-* WWW.GAMERSHUT.DE Q3DM13	2/ 6	osp	UDP	45
-=GAMEPLAY=- CCTF1,1 CCTF1	0/12	cctf	UDP	45
AREA56.COM - TEAM 1, Q3TOURNEY3	1/10	osp	UDP	45
GAMEARENA OSP TDM 2 Q3DM6	0/16	osp05	UDP	45
GAMEONLINE.IT - ANC_ Q3DM6	0/14	osp	UDP	45

488 of 1777 Arena Servers.
Visit www.quake3world.com - News- Community- Events- Files

BACK   SPECIFY   REFRESH   CREATE   FIGHT

The Internet servers list. Note that the *PC ZONE Q3A* server (top) is popular with gamers and is nearly always full.

OPENWORLD ADSL FREE FOR A YEAR*

What does ADSL stand for?

Send your answer on a postcard to **I FEEL THE NEED FOR ONLINE SPEED**, *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF. Entries must be in by April 5, 2001.

★ *Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post and must ensure that they have the necessary PC hardware, a BT phone line and be resident in an area where their local BT exchange has been suitably upgraded. The provision of prizes will be at BT's discretion and subject to the BTopenworld terms and conditions as found at www.btopenworld.com. Email entries will not be accepted. Entrants must be 18 years or older and a resident of the UK. Employees of either BT or PC ZONE, their families and agents and anyone else connected with this competition are not eligible to take part. Only entries received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. No cash alternative. No correspondence will be entered into. BT's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.*
* Subject to minimum requirements and availability.

You don't need to have the latest PC to enjoy BTopenworld, but your PC must conform to these minimum requirements.

- ★ **Pentium 200MHz or equivalent**
- ★ **32Mb RAM**
- ★ **16bit sound card**
- ★ **4x speed CD ROM player**
- ★ **Video card/display capable of 800x600, 256 colours, SVGA monitor**
- ★ **150Mb free hard disk space**
- ★ **Windows 98, 98SE or 2000 Professional**
- ★ **An available USB socket**

www.btopenworld.com
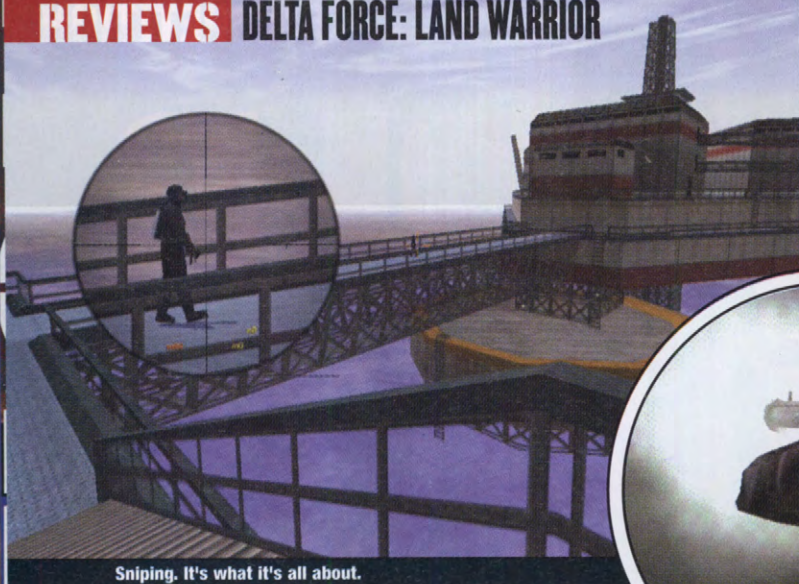
Sniping. It's what it's all about.

Some of these bricks explode!
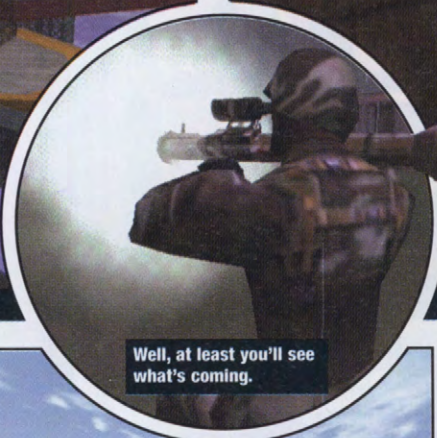
Well, at least you'll see what's coming.

All you need now is a Chevy and dungarees.

And he doesn't even know who hit him. Oh, the joy.
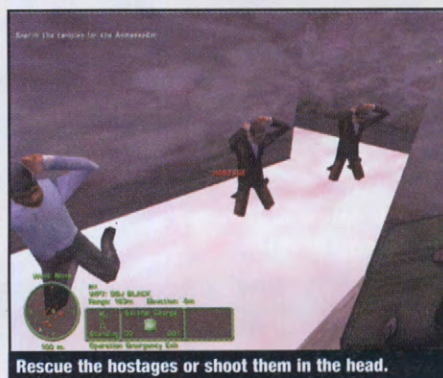
Rescue the hostages or shoot them in the head.

DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR

★ £34.99 • Novalogic • Out now

Rifleman _Phil Wand_ puts his marksmanship skills to the test in Novalogic's latest long-distance shooting contest

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

They're everywhere these days. Hidden behind crates in _Counter-Strike_, hogging the ramparts in _Unreal Tournament_, assembled in large numbers atop _Team Fortress_ battlements. There they remain, rooted to the spot like Bernini sculptures, while the real men on their team head into battle and do combat the old fashioned way. While it could be said it's their job to plant one on you one before you see them, nobody likes a sniper. Nobody.

That is, unless the game in question is _Delta Force_, which Novalogic has been touting as a Shangri-La for cowardly bastards since its initial outing back in 1998. Here's a

multiplayer shooter that actually wants you to lie on your lunch and play tin can alley with dots on the horizon. Of course, everyone around you has identical equipment, so when you're on the receiving end of one of these long-distance assassinations, you have no clue as to where your executioner lies, nor why your

"So along with CTF, King Of The Hill and a few other variations, co-op makes the multiplayer game a wonderful thing"

brain has decided to exit via your nostrils. Novalogic claims this is entertainment.

Strangely, they're not wrong. The sprawling outdoor vistas that form _Land Warrior_ maps are often home to 50 or more players, the crack of distant sniper fire flicking your

eardrums and making your eyes dart around the landscape in an adrenaline fuelled panic. The game is all about concealment and stealth, and the longer you stand upright, the shorter you're going to live, so sprint over to the armoury and run your hands over the tantalising range of shooters on offer. While the number of close quarters tools – MP5, AK-47, AUG and others – dwarf the range of sniper rifles, the gun you want if you're going to survive for more than a minute is one with a zoom lens. The Barrett is everyone's weapon of choice here, and with an effective range of more than

1.5km, you can put yourself a country mile away from the action and still come out on top.

Gameplay wise, movement is a little stilted compared to the fluidity of _Unreal Tournament_ or _Counter-Strike_, and the graphics remain chunky close up, even though Novalogic has done away with its old VoxelSpace engine. Mind you, neither intrudes on your enjoyment. The sheer joy at finding an online shooter where you can play co-operatively, with you and your buddies ganging up in the single-player missions, is enough to obscure the game's numerous flaws. So along with Capture The Flag, King Of The Hill and a few other familiar variations, co-op makes the multiplayer game a truly wonderful thing.

You're also ready to roll straight out of the box. The way

you connect online is through NovaWorld, a hub of Novalogic's own servers that cover all the styles of play and permit up to 50 players to spread themselves about the map. NovaWorld is sewn seamlessly into the game interface, and does everything you need, it also permits Voice-Over-Net, which allows you to talk to your team mates in real time. **PCZ**

DAWN OF ACES

⊙ $25 per month unlimited use • iEN • www.dawnofaces.com • Out now

The not-quite-so-magnificent *Daniel Emery* in an even less impressive flying machine

There's a certain sentimentality associated with WWI flying. While the troops in the trenches were being gassed, shelled, shot and generally slaughtered in droves, the knights of the sky still had a code of conduct and chivalry that evidently lingered on untill the end of WWII. At least, that's what history would have us believe. In truth, the pilots of WWI usually went into combat with only 16 hours of training, British pilots were denied the use of parachutes (it sapped the fighting spirit apparently), and bailing observers from balloons were shot in the silk. So much for gallantry.

data for the flight models, but other than that they are blood brothers. Not that this is any bad thing. *Warbirds* still boasts some of the best graphics for the current generation of flight sims (although Ubi Soft's *IL-2 Sturmovik* is about to piss on everyone's fire)

Another similarity between *Dawn Of Aces* and *Warbirds* is the play: it is entirely online. Sure there's an off-line mode against semi-decent AI drones, so you don't become instant fodder when you play against real people, but it's on the servers where the real action is. Or rather isn't. The WWII plane servers such as

Bugger, no parachute.

It's slow, but these crates can turn sharpish.

> ❝It's a free download, so if you fancy a flutter then you can try it offline without spending a penny❞

Despite the mystique, there have been precious few WWI games. *Rowan's Flying Corps* failed to please the online gamer, *Red Barron II* was just a journey into sentimentality and Maxis' *Sim Somme-Slaughter* never got off the drawing board. Enter iEN's *Dawn Of Aces*, stage left.

Now, before we go any further, the more observant of you may notice a remarkable similarity between the *Dawn Of Aces* graphics and the *Warbirds 2.x* series. That's because they're basically one and the same. Different graphics for the planes (obviously) and new

Warbirds, *Aces High* et al usually have more than 100 players on at any one time, the *Dawn Of Aces* server usually boast around 25-30 players. While this does lend itself to some good one-on-one dogfights, the big whirling melees that one would hope for are nowhere to be seen.

CAMEL LIGHTS
The game does offer a wide choice of aircraft from the famous Sopworth Camel through to the Uber Zeppelin with a bomb load from hell (and a life expectancy of a Mayfly), but yet fails to give you the

feeling of excitement and speed you expect from most other flight sims. And the reason for this is simple: WWI aeroplanes are very dull. Sure, they can turn on a penny and loop the loop every 10 seconds, but so what? Shooting down planes takes an age (no cannons, only crappy machine guns, see) and you spend half your time wishing things would just speed up a little. It's not a fault of the game, just that dogfights were comparatively dull back then.
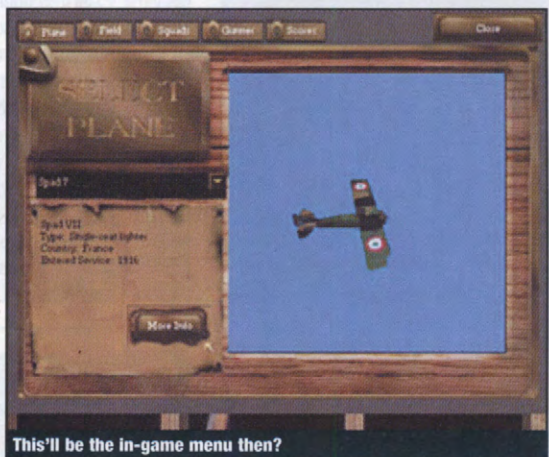
It's a free download though (18Mb), so if you fancy a flutter then you can try it out offline without spending a penny, and if you like it, ready your credit card for a monthly bill. On the other hand, if you want a little more speed and excitement, try *Aces High* or the just about to be unleashed new version of *Warbirds*.

Even though it's cheaper to play than it once was, *Dawn Of Aces* hasn't been updated for ages. Perhaps, like WWI planes themselves, the world has moved on a bit. PCZ

Sausage time!

This'll be the in-game menu then?

You don't get to see much from a biplane.

Manning gun stations on Zeppelins is fine until your balloon pops.

VERDICT ☑

⬆ **UPPERS** Solid gameplay • Offline mode • If you like WWI air combat...

⬇ **DOWNERS** ...And there are more that don't • Old *WarBirds* technology, needs updating • A bit dull • Needs more players

★★☆★★

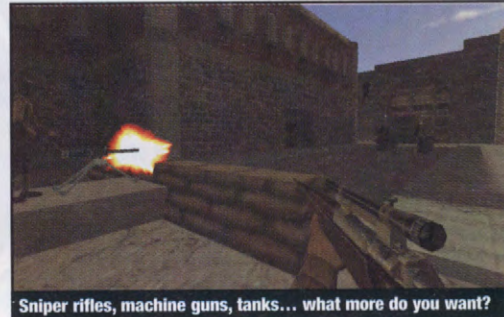**Fun but old, slow and in need of updating**

MODWATCH

Tony Lamb's monthly trip to the land of mod

Day of Defeat has great atmosphere. What you lookin' at Fritz?

Sniper rifles, machine guns, tanks... what more do you want?

DAY OF DEFEAT BETA 1

⊛ Requires full version of *Half-Life*/retail version of *Counter-Strike* • www.dayofdeateat.com • Out now

We love *Counter-Strike*. We stroke it regularly every day and thrash it furiously at night, but the terrorist versus counter-terrorist theme is becoming a bit overused. How about a mod based on *Counter-Strike* featuring Stormtroopers versus *Star Wars* rebels, or, failing that, GIs versus Stormtroopers from an altogether different age.

Day Of Defeat is the closest to the latter and probably the best WWII-themed mod to date. What it takes from *Counter-Strike* are the real-world maps and objectives, cut and pasted with *Team Fortress* gameplay, meaning that rather than spend credits on weapons and armour, you choose from one of four character classes and are given weapons based on that. Depending on

your preference, this is either a good or a bad thing and in the collective *ZONE* opinion, while classes are designed to promote gameplay, they rarely do.

At the moment you can choose to play as either German or American, either as a rifleman, assault trooper, sniper or with heavy weapons. Each class has a main weapon and a side arm and usually a couple of grenades. The weapons and players' models certainly lack polish, but they do the trick, helped by the fact that the tension is kept high thanks to great use of sound. Explosions can be heard in the distance, machine guns rattle above the trenches and the characters speak in their native tongue.

There are other nice touches. Jump about too much and you'll need to slow

down to catch your breath. Grenades have a long timer (you could even throw one back if you fancy your luck) and reloading is a slow process that will leave you horribly vulnerable. Falling damage is gruesomely realistic and respawn has enough of a delay to make death a real annoyance. It all adds up to a great WWII mod that may one day take over from *Counter-Strike*. You never know.

VERDICT ☑

⬆ **UPPERS** Great online support • Map variety • Gruesome realism
⬇ **DOWNERS** Flat textures • Limited weapons • Aiming glitches

★★★★★ **The best WWII mod yet**

FULL METAL JACKET ALPHA

⊛ Requires full version of *Quake III Arena* • www.planetquake.com/fmj • Out TBC

Quake III mod *Full Metal Jacket* is set in the Vietnam war and you get to be either a pot-smoking American GI or one of the equally gung-ho and marginally less drug-crazed Viet Cong locals.

FMJ plays as a standard death-match, but the best way is to play team deathmatches or preferably mission-based games. This forces real co-operation – trying to win the war on your own will only get you killed.

The maps in *FMJ* are nothing short of superb – even at this early alpha stage – with a great level of detail in the foreboding, jungle setting. Expect lots of pools, rivers, waterfalls and creeping vines. The animal sound effects add to

the ambience, and there is '60s music to go with the end credits. Top stuff.

Faults are few. The player models and weapon skins need some work, but this an alpha after all – *Counter-Strike* took until Beta 4 to get noticed. If the gameplay and final models are as good as the maps, *FMJ* could be a classic.
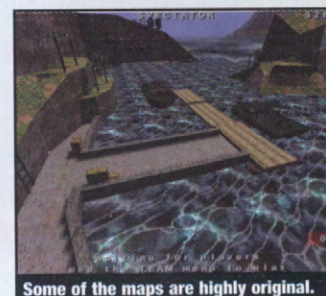
VERDICT ☑

⬆ **UPPERS** Glorious maps • Nice animal sound effects • Mission-based objectives
⬇ **DOWNERS** An all-round spit and polish wouldn't go astray

★★★★☆ **We love you long time**

The potential for this mod is huge.

Some of the maps are highly original.

WASTELAND HALF-LIFE BETA 2

⊕ Requires full version of *Half-Life* or *Counter-Strike* • www.wastelandhalflife.com • Out now

Fancy a post-apocalyptic *Half-Life* mod? You do? Well thank gawd for that because that's what *Wasteland* is all about. It's a top-class mod and its latest update adds even more features to an already popular freebie.
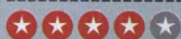
When you fire up *Wasteland* you get to choose your character and your primary and secondary weapons. These are the ones you'll respawn with when you get killed, which probably won't take long. Weapon choices are a strange blend of standard *Counter-Strike* fodder – the Desert Eagle and MP5 – plus more personal choices like a dirty great big baseball bat with nails in it.

The maps are good too and vary from dark and dingy mines to equally dark and dingy inner-city slums. A few more wouldn't go amiss though. There are three gameplay styles: standard free-for-all deathmatch, team deathmatch and object capture. A last-man-standing option is on its way in the next release (Beta 2.5), as well as multi-stage objectives and clan match support.

The hand cannon packs a mean punch.
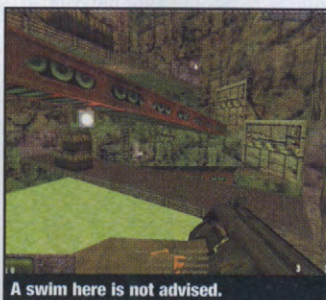
A swim here is not advised.

VERDICT ☑

⊕ **UPPERS** Looks great • Attention to detail • Good maps • Realism
⊖ **DOWNERS** Needs more online presence • Weird weapon choices

★★★★☆
Not as popular as it deserves to be

GRIDIRON V2.0

⊕ Requires full version of *Quake III Arena* • www.planetquake.com/gridiron • Out now

Grab the ball and run like mad.

Bounce pads make things interesting.

Gridiron is an all-action look at the world of football US-style. It's a sort of rugby game, but with girlie body armour. Don't tell 'em we said that though…

The game is simple. There are two teams on the field, two goals and one ball. Each team then takes it in turn to be on offence while the other is defending, the objective being to get your ball into the scoring zone at the other end of the pitch without getting yourself fragged. You can pass the ball around your team (if the player carrying the ball is killed it's classed as a 'fumble') and use your weapons to kill the other team or even blast your ball-carrier out of harm's way. A standard touchdown is worth six points but rocket-jumping over the enemy goal with the ball is worth seven.

This is a fast-moving game, and to add to the fun, *Gridiron* is customisable to some degree. You can set up binds to let you do field goals, different distance throws and more. Weapons are standard *Q3* fodder but tweaked – the railgun is less powerful, the shotgun more useful. To add to the atmosphere, you'll even get crowds cheering when you score… or when you get killed for that matter.

VERDICT ☑

⊕ **UPPERS** Great fun • Good maps • Customisable options • Addictive
⊖ **DOWNERS** Samey maps • Distressing lack of buxom cheerleaders

★★★★☆ **Rugby with railguns**

INSTAGIB V1.27

⊕ Requires *Quake III Arena* • www.planetquake.com/instagib • Out now

It's a classic – often copied, frequently elaborated upon, but rarely bettered. As a test of reflexes there is nothing to beat it – *Instagib* is the original 'one hit kills' game.

The premise is simple. The mod takes away all weapons except for the railgun, raises its power so that one shot will kill any player instantly, and then makes sure that no one is likely to run out of ammo. This means that no single player can ever have an advantage in terms of firepower or strength (there aren't any armour or health fixes either, sorry) and the only way to stay alive is to run faster, react faster and aim faster than anyone else. If you slow down, act in a predictable manner or – heaven forbid – miss a shot, then you're dead. Ouch.

Instagib uses the standard *Quake III* maps (the later ones with platforms and jump pads work best), so there's nothing extra to download or anything new to learn and is equally happy running online or with Bots.
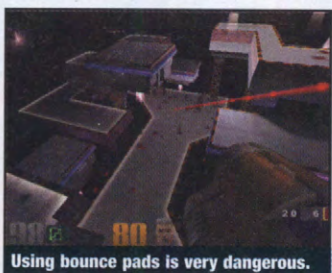
No new maps, no new weapons – just pure action and your reflexes are the only thing that will keep you alive. It doesn't get any more raw than this!

Using bounce pads is very dangerous.

The railgun is all you need. It's a blast.

VERDICT ☑

⊕ **UPPERS** Super-quick download • The best reaction tester bar none
⊖ **DOWNERS** Adrenalin-induced trembles

★★★☆☆
Simple, small and immense fun

COMING SOON ⁇ ☒

HERETIC FORTRESS V4.5

Out recently was one of the finest mods for one of the most underrated games – a fantasy version of *Team Fortress* for Raven's *Heretic II*. It's been around a while, but this new version shows that both the game and the mod have aged well. Find out more by visiting www.hereticii.com/thf – where you'll find details of *Heretic Fortress* for *Quake III Arena*.

HOW POPULAR?

According to GameSpy (www.gamespy.com) *Half-Life* (including *Counter-Strike* and *TFC*) is still wiping the online floor with the opposition. Here's the current server numbers: *Half-Life* – 5,033; *Quake III Arena* – 2,634; *Unreal Tournament* – 2,448; *Starseige: Tribes* – 884 and *Quake II* – 865.

INFILTRATION V2.85

One of our favourite *Unreal Tournament* mods, *Infiltration*, is near to reaching an important milestone with a revamped menu system that will allow full team configuration and realistic prices for weapons. Soon to be followed by an impressive looking set of maps, V2.85 of this real-world mod should be out pretty damn soon. www.planetunreal.com/infiltration.

taking the road less traveled

READERS' CHALLENGE

You wanna polish off *Shoemaker*, chop *Woods* and moider *Korda*? Well here's how…

1 CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Pick a game, any game, so long as it's one of these: *Counter-Strike*; *Quake III Arena*; *Quake III Jail Break*; *Quake III Rocket Arena*; *Unreal Tournament*; *Star Trek: Voyager Elite Force*; *Half-Life*; *Virtual Pool 3*; *Age Of Empires II: Age Of Kings* (4-a-side); *C&C: Red Alert 2* (4-a-side); *PGA Championship Golf 2000*.

2 THROW DOWN THE GAUNTLET

If your clan is up for a slap and one of you can spell, email us at **letters@pczone.co.uk** (Subject: *PC ZONE* Readers' Challenge) and depending on the other contenders, you may be in with a chance. In your email include the name of the game you want to be beaten at, your clan details (website, name), your real names, handles, ages and two of your daytime telephone numbers, so that we can get in touch with you to sort out the details. Don't bother sending in a challenge unless you're certain you'll all be available on the given date and please make sure every team member has access to a machine that allows them to play the chosen game online.

3 CHECK YOUR DIARY

If we like the cut of your gib, we'll get back to you, so make sure your chaps can turn up online on the specified date. Oh, and if we catch anyone trying to cheat, we'll not only disqualify you but we'll personally come over to chop off your fingers. The next challenge is on Monday April 9, so fill in those empty diaries and gather your tribe. Don't forget, if you beat us over the course of the game, you'll win a prize.

4 REAP THE REWARDS

If you do win, fairly and squarely and without even the slightest whiff of cheating, we'll give every single member of your team a Razer

The PlayingFields

MARCH 19

6:30 – 8:30pm
PC ZONE vs CLAN FLETCH
Counter-Strike

9:00 – 11:00pm
FREE-FOR-ALL
Quake III Arena /Counter-Strike

Boomslang 2000 dpi mouse, worth £69.99 each. Probably the best gaming peripheral in the world, we use them and know for a fact that they give us an edge over the sort of mouse you're probably using. Which is one of the reasons we'll beat you. If you want to know more about the Boomslang, check out our review in the Gadget's section on page 112.

PC ZONE Free-For-All ?X

GETTING CONNECTED

Get ready for some hot fragging action…

Not in the main challenge? You can still get your arses whipped by joining the free-for-all. To join our *QIII* FFA server in *Quake III*, bring down the console by hitting the key located above the Tab key and typing the following: */password pczone* then hit *Return* and type: */connect 195.149.48.59:27900* hit *Return* again and you'll be connected.

To join the *Counter-Strike* FFA, from the opening *Counter-Strike* menu click *Play CS* then *Internet Games* and then *Filter*. Check the box for *Are In My Favourites List* and uncheck the other boxes.

Now click *Filter* again, and click *Add Server* then type: *195.149.48.59:27016*. You should now see a server called "PC ZONE Challenge" listed on your screen. Double click on this server to join it. The password is *pczone*.

Servers will be available for practice from 12pm. Maps will cycle every 15 minutes to allow everyone a chance to play, so keep trying. If you have any problems connecting, telephone 020 7388 0004 on the day of the challenge.

HAVE A GO ?X

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS

Provided by www.games-world.net

The *PC ZONE* game servers are now more popular than ever and to make sure only *PC ZONE* readers can play on them, we've decided to password them all. Don't worry though, every month we'll be printing the password you need to get fragging.

Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24:27966
Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24:27968

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.49:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.49:27020
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 - 194.93.134.51:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #4 - 194.93.134.51:27020

Unreal Tournament #1 - 194.93.134.52:7787
Unreal Tournament #2 - 194.93.134.52:7777

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.50:27015
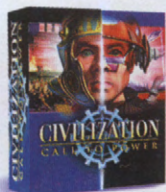Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.50:27020

Password: Strawberry

PCZSUPERTEST
RALLY AND

⬆ **L to R:** ✪ **TAKEN FOR A RIDE** Martin Korda
✪ **IN THE DRIVING SEAT** Chris Anderson ✪
BACK SEAT DRIVING Dave Woods ✪ **LOST AS**
USUAL Steve Hill ✪ **HANGING ON** Keith Pullin

OFF-ROAD

How much fun can you have in a driving game where nobody else is on the track? Quite a lot as it happens, as the rally games on test here prove admirably. We threw a couple of off-road games into the mix just to confuse you, and ourselves, and set about finding the best one of the lot

Before this Supertest even began there was much talk of exactly what constitutes a good driving game. There is no denying the subliminal thrill of playing a game that oozes realism, but this alone is not enough to keep us entertained for long. We agreed the 'fun' factor was high on our shopping list when we went searching for the best game on test here. It was argued that realism in itself was fun for a lot of people, but we decided that many of you probably couldn't give a hoot for realism and if you didn't experience a

genuine adrenaline rush when playing a driving game you would unbuckle your seat belt and go elsewhere in search of entertainment. We wanted to find a driving game we could not stop playing, a driving game that challenged our supreme driving skills, and a game that was generally 'a bit of a laugh'. With this in mind, we tested all the titles here rigorously. Many muddy tracks were traversed in the interest of finding the greatest rally/off-road game currently available on PC. We found it. Read on and all will be revealed.

THE CONTENDERS

RALLY MASTERS

RALLY CHAMP 2000

COLIN MCRAE 2
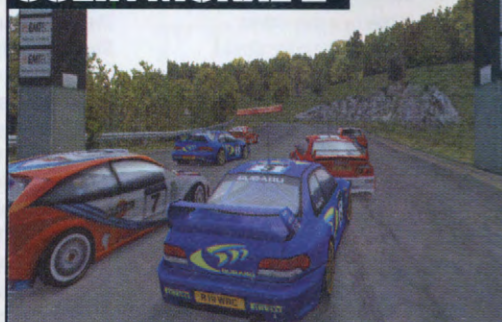
MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

INSANE

The quality of the handling in *Rally Masters* is a point of some contention.

Realism takes a nap when the rally goes to town.

Still a damn fine game today.

RALLY MASTERS

Steve: *Rally Masters* is one of those games that covers a lot of ground. It tries to do everything, and mainly it does everything OK, but it just lacks that final 10 per cent. If you saw it for a tenner now you should snap it up. It's got everything, all the stats, the handling was realistic, it's just not quite up to *McRae* standards.
Chris: How do you know the handling was realistic? Have you driven a real rally car?
Steve: I've been driven around in one by a rally driver.
Chris: That's quite close I suppose.
Keith: I actually thought there wasn't really that much difference between *Rally Masters* and *Colin McRae*.

Steve: No, you're wrong, there's a huge amount of difference.
Martin: Some of the cars handled like radio controlled cars in *Rally Masters*.
Steve: That's rubbish, you haven't played it properly.
Martin: I *have* played it properly.
Dave: There's a lot of different cars, and they handle pretty differently, it's a bit light if anything.
Chris: But that's good for people like me who are totally crap at driving games.
Steve: The differences between *Rally Masters* and *McRae* are mainly aesthetic. In *Rally Masters* you can go from a gravel track to a sand track and it doesn't really feel that different.
Keith: When I went into intermediate set-up in *Rally Masters* and prepared to set-up my tyres for a mixed gravel and sand track I found when I went on to the sand with a gravel setup there was a huge difference, I was sliding all over the place.
Steve: In *Rally Masters*?
Keith: Yeah. I started messing around with tyre set-ups and the difference was amazing.
Everyone: *(silence)*
Dave: Default tyres are the best, definitely.

Martin: It just seems to be a bit of a mixed bag. Some of it seems really realistic, like when you're doing the head to head on a normal road it feels quite realistic, but one time I clipped the edge of a barrier and went flying back the way I came and barrel-rolled all over the place. It just felt a bit stupid then.
Steve: It's got some really steep tracks and hills, there's a real feeling of height in places.
Dave: *Colin 2* hasn't got that at all. It makes a real difference – when you're going uphill it goes quite a lot slower. The damage is realistic too – when your car gets damaged it gets quite sluggish and it's very hard to turn. In *Colin 2* your car takes damage but it doesn't really have any effect on the car. You can drive into a wall and carry on regardless.
Keith: It affects the handling significantly in *Rally Masters* when you get damage. You can be driving along at 40 or 50 miles an hour because your car is damaged and everyone else is driving along at 70 miles an hour. It can be really frustrating.
Steve: It makes it more of a playable game, trying to keep in contention.
Chris: I have trouble staying in the race without any damage at all.
Dave: It's difficult but it never actually stops the race. You can take a couple of big splashes but you can actually use that to get round corners faster. But I thought the head to heads were a bit weird on this one. You can never tell where you are; you can't tell whether you're winning or losing.
Keith: I'd like to see a sort of real-time rally game where you could literally race for hours on end, so it would be like a real rally.
Dave: *Le Mans* is like that, you

can actually drive a 24-hour race.
Chris: Why on Earth would you want to do that?
Keith: Well you can save as you go along.
Chris: But that defeats the whole point of driving a 24-hour race. You should have to sit there and never go out and play the whole lot to the end. That would sort you out.
Keith: I was watching rally on TV the other day and *Colin McRae* took a tumble or something and another car screamed past as he was fixing it. You never get that in a rally game. You never actually get that sort of realism in any rally game that I know of.
Dave: It would be good to see people changing wheels by the road while you're zooming round, that sort of thing.
Martin: The sounds are a bit rubbish in *Rally Masters* – it sounds like a fly in a jam jar.

Chris: The sound is rubbish in all these games, though.
Martin: That's because they never get it right, that's why. It's the same with all rally and bike games, they just beef the sound up a bit and chuck a little bit of extra bass in there.
Chris: Maybe if they sampled the sounds from real cars, that would probably help.
Martin: They claim they *do* use samples.

Dave: And they probably do – the problem is they have to hold back on the sounds, otherwise you'd be running out of the room with your ears bleeding.
Steve: Well, I think *Rally Masters* is a good game. I'd still recommend it.
Dave: Apparently you can knock your co-driver unconscious, which I tried to do by driving full speed into a wall, but it didn't work. He's pretty hardy.
Keith: He's hardy, but it works. I knocked him out and he wouldn't give directions because he was unconscious.
Dave: Really? That's fantastic.
Keith: He just said "that really hurt" and that was it. Silence. I was really worried.
Everyone: *(laughs)*
Chris: Yes that's exactly what you would say if someone drove straight into a wall with you in the passenger seat: "that really hurt".

> ## "The graphics are pretty good, apart from the car models, which are quite atrocious"
> **DAVE ON *RALLY MASTERS***

Dave: The graphics are pretty good, apart from the car models, which are quite atrocious.
Keith: It's got poor collision detection too. If you hit a tree and watch the replay you're actually about ten metres away from the tree when you hit it, but it's still a great game, I'm still playing it.
Martin: It's pretty good I suppose.
Keith: It's a damn fine game.
Steve: It's definitely in the top three.
Dave: It was good for it's time and it's still good now.

RALLY MASTERS

A competent rally game that stood head and shoulders above its rivals on release, but looks a bit dated now alongside the likes of *Colin McRae 2*. If you can find it at cut price, snap it up. It may not be the best driving game out there, but it runs a close second to the best, unless you're Keith Pullin, in which case it *is* the best.

ORIGINAL SCORE	84%
DEVELOPER	Infogrames
PUBLISHER	Infogrames
REVIEWED	PCZ #89

Hundreds of miles of authentic, accurately re-created and incredibly boring roads.
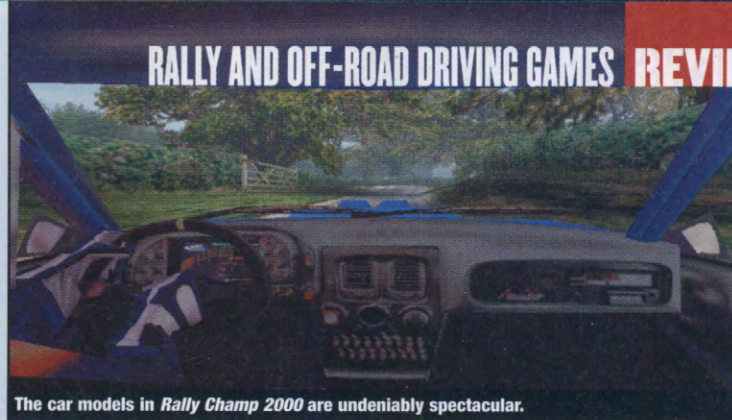
The car models in *Rally Champ 2000* are undeniably spectacular.

RALLY CHAMP 2000

Martin: It's a good game, but nobody's playing it anymore.
Dave: It doesn't matter that nobody's playing it anymore. Nobody's playing the game I made when I was ten years old.
Chris: You made a game? A rally game?
Dave: Well it started off as a rally game... well sort of a rally game.
Chris: Why isn't it in the Supertest then?
Dave: It would probably run too fast on today's PCs. You had to drive a car between 'X's that were sort of falling down and if you got to the end you got to record a pop single and see if it went up the charts.

> **"Looks great, sounds great, doesn't play too good – the end"**
> MARTIN ON *RALLY CHAMP 2000*

Keith: Like you do when you win a rally game.
Dave: It wasn't really a rally game, just a race to get to the studios.
Chris: Sounds really good. Do a remake and we'll put it in the next Supertest.
Dave: I'll think about it.
Chris: What were we talking about? Oh yeah, *Rally Champ.*
Dave: It has absolutely superb graphics, better than any of the other games here. The cars are especially good. It's got great reflections – you can even look inside the cars and see spare tyres and things.
Steve: Yes, the car models are really in-depth.
Dave: The rest of it's pretty shit though.
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Dave: To give it its due, all the courses are real.

Steve: They actually got a video camera and went round places like Wales filming. But if you didn't know that, it wouldn't make any difference to the game.
Dave: If anything, the courses seem worse than the made-up ones.
Steve: If they'd actually concentrated on just making a decent game it might have been good, but instead they're restricted by having to go film some stupid farm in Wales. Although it's more realistic, it's probably harder to play than some of the other games here.
Chris: But for people who like ultra-realistic driving games that's probably exactly what they want.
Dave: But that's the weird thing. For a game that goes for that kind of realism, with real car models and real tracks, the handling is really arcadey. You can sort of bounce round tracks a little bit.
Steve: And then there's the immovable hay bales. The windshields still shatter though if you hit a tree.
Dave: But that looks awful – it doesn't even look realistic. And it's really annoying, all those immovable objects like the hay bales, and there's no damage that affects the handling as such.
Steve: The courses are a bit long too. You can end up driving for 18 hours in the dark.
Keith: Yes, the courses are ridiculously long.
Steve: That's because they're real. That's what we're saying: if you want a really realistic driving game it's not going to be

anywhere near as much fun.
Chris: Rally games are a bit weird anyway if you ask me. You drive around forever with no sod anywhere near you.
Dave: Yes but, if you think about it Chris, there's no sod anywhere near you in any other driving game either because they're all five miles ahead of you.
Chris: That's true, but at least I know they're there, I just can't see them.
Dave: Well you see them at the start, but that's about it.
Steve: But there are arcade options in it, if you want to just have a race instead of a proper rally.
Martin: This game has the worst co-driver of all time as well. One time I flipped over completely about three times, and he just said "Where do you think you're going?".
Dave: The only thing he ever said to me was "you've done it" or "well done" at the end of a race. What you really want in rally games is Alan Partridge commentary: "Now you might think that's funny, but I think it's illegal."
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Steve: "What are the stickers for? Advertising, it really is that simple."
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Steve: I can never work out what the co-drivers are saying.
Dave: I can't even work out what they're saying in *Colin McRae 2.* I listen and all I can hear is them shouting "icecream2, icecream1".
Steve: Ice cream? What game have you been playing?
Dave: In the end I just gave up. I just look at the arrows rather than listening to the voices.
Chris: I don't know why you all say this game is so shit; it looks brilliant, and it's easy to drive. For some people, that's enough.
Dave: The graphics are brilliant, but the rest of it's a bit crap.
Martin: You keep sliding all over

the place. It would be good if you didn't keep crashing into things.
Chris: Well, don't crash into things then. It clearly states in the manual "Don't crash into things as it may impede your enjoyment."
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Dave: It goes back to what we were saying: do we want realism or fun? If you want a straight rally game fair enough, but it has to be a bit realistic for it to be fun.
Chris: But some people won't find it fun if it's too realistic.
Dave: I don't mean realistic like F1 games are, which is too hard. I picked up *Colin McRae 2* and started winning things straight away, then when I got to the intermediate part it was quite hard. That's what we want – a challenge.
Keith: Do you think *Colin McRae 2* is trying to be realistic, or is it trying to be fun?
Dave: It's inbetween.
Keith: I think *Rally Champ* tries to be realistic, but it's not fun. *Colin McRae* is not trying that hard to be realistic, but it turns out to be more realistic in the end because it's so much fun.
Dave: Didn't they use ordnance surveys to create the maps in *Rally Champ?* That's quite good.
Steve: Yeah, when you think about it there are tons of real roads in there. If all you want is a tour of Wales looking at fences and gates then you'll probably quite like it.
Dave: Is there something like 420 miles of actual road?
Steve: That sounds about

right. It's quite a feat, but it doesn't make a good game.
Dave: But that's all it is though, it's just a road, not trees and landmarks. They just took the road and said "OK the road goes like this in this bit..."
Steve: No, they actually filmed the whole thing with video cameras. They claim to have filmed every bit of road and then just sort of copied it into a game.
Martin: The sound is quite chunky. The cars sound more like rally cars than in any of the other games.
Dave: The sound and graphics are great. Shame they didn't do anything with the rest of it or we might have a good game on our hands.
Steve: It's authentic, but not exactly a laugh a minute.
Martin: Looks great, sounds great, doesn't play too good. The end.

RALLY CHAMP

In terms of landscape accuracy, *Rally Champ* has no rivals. Miles upon miles of accurately detailed terrain make this the most authentic rally game you can buy. The graphics and sound are also of an extremely high quality, but iffy handling and immovable obstacles let down what could have been a landmark title.

ORIGINAL SCORE:	82%
PUBLISHER	Actualise
DEVELOPER	Actualise
REVIEWED	PCZ #84

Colin McRae is all about supreme playability.

The tiniest error and all is lost…

The weather effects are particularly nice.

COLIN MCRAE 2

Steve: *Colin McRae 2* basically does the same things as the other two rally games here, it just does them better.

Chris: Oh, well that's the end of that then. What's the next game?

Everyone: (*laughs*)

Keith: Didn't *Rally Masters* get more *than Colin McRae* in the magazine?

Everyone: Did it?

Keith: I actually prefer *Rally Masters*. It's got loads more single-player options.

Steve: No it hasn't, all these games have the same stuff in them. What options are you on about?

Keith: It's got everything, time trials, challenge cups, load of stuff that *Colin 2* hasn't got.

Chris: It's true, there are more modes in *Rally Masters* but *Colin McRae 2* is a much better game.

Dave: I reviewed *Colin McRae 2* for another magazine. It was Sunday, I was totally hungover, and the thought of doing freelance was a nightmare. I fired up *Colin McRae* and played it for about four or five hours and it was the first game I've played in about a year that got me addicted straight away. You can win games straight off but you really have to concentrate. I was sitting there gripping the gamepad and staring at the screen while I played it. If you lose your concentration one little bit it can be a total disaster.

Steve: I was the same, I played it for four or five hours without stopping to relieve myself. It's not a game where you can have an itch on your arm or anything. You have to be completely glued to the monitor all the time, sitting there with your shoulders hunched, concentrating, and occasionally going blind.

Martin: It's a bit like the early

Formula One Grand Prix games. It's realistic but not to the point where it's no fun.

Dave: But you can set it to be ridiculously realistic if you want to. I played it at Codemasters when they had it like that and I couldn't even stay on a straight road. And it can't have been me, because obviously I'm fantastic.

Steve: Except I won every game except one.

Dave: You won the first game, but in the second game there was a steward's inquiry for your very, very violent driving. And I went down a dead-end when I was in the lead. And…

Steve: But it's good that you can do that. You can just go into arcade mode and barge people off the road if you just want to have a laugh.

Martin: Multiplayer is the best thing about it; it's a right laugh.

Keith: Yes it is, the single-player game is too easy.

Steve: Not at intermediate level, it's really hard.

Keith: No, it's easy.

Steve: How come I can beat you in multiplayer then if you're so good?

Chris: Have you completed it?

Keith: Erm. No.

Chris: I was going to say, I've never met anyone who's completed a car game before.

Dave: You've been playing it on easy.

Steve: The step up from easy to intermediate is massive.

Dave: You can do it, it's just really hard, you really have to concentrate. I got to the point where I lost by about five seconds. I kept trying and concentrated and got it down

to about two seconds. It gets really tense. You start to shit yourself when you're in the lead by about four seconds, then you make the tiniest mistake and your lead is down to two seconds.

Steve: It's a fine line between not crashing but still keeping up with the pace.

Chris: You don't get completely bored just racing against the clock then?

Steve: No, you don't for some reason. You can see the clock and you know you really have to make up a lot of ground in the last mile or you're not going to win.

Dave: Also, in other games you can be driving perfectly and some AI arse comes along and slams you off the track and puts you right off, whereas in *Colin*, if you

make a mistake at least it's your mistake.

Steve: I like all the water bits too, and the weather effects are great.

Dave: And the damage is realistic too. If you fly into a wall, little bits of glass fly out and the windshield's in a mess. It's real damage as opposed to just painting a crack on to the windshield. There are so many good things you can say about *Colin McRae*. The balance is

perfect – it's just one of those games that plays brilliantly. The graphics aren't perfect, *Rally Champ* is better, but they do the job. You can't complain about the graphics as the game is so good.

Steve: But it doesn't sacrifice fun for realism. It's realistic but it's still perfectly playable.

Martin: If it was too realistic you'd just end up spinning all over the place all the time.

Steve: It's like learning to be a good rally driver – the game encourages you to improve yourself as you go along.

Dave: If it was realistic you'd just end up in a ditch after three minutes, which is actually what

> ❝**It doesn't sacrifice fun for realism. It's realistic but it's still perfectly playable**❞
>
> **STEVE ON** *COLIN MCRAE 2*

Colin McRae is doing in most of his races at the moment.

Steve: Yeah, he seems to have lost the plot. He's a bit of a shit person to have a game about at the moment, but the game is obviously far more famous than he is now.

Dave: Didn't his son write for *PC ZONE*? Someone was telling me his son either wrote for us, or wanted to, but he wasn't allowed.

Steve: Why not? We let Terry Pratchett's daughter in, didn't we?

Everyone: (*laughs*)

COLIN MCRAE 2

A superb blend of realism and edge-of-the-seat action makes *Colin McRae Rally 2* stand out in the rally games crowd. Perhaps most noted for its perfectly balanced learning curve, it excels in almost every other area too, making for an almost perfect rally driving experience.

	86%
ORIGINAL SCORE	
PUBLISHER	Codemasters
DEVELOPER	Codemasters
REVIEWED	PCZ #98

Motocross Madness 2 puts pure over-the-top fun in front of any idea of realism.
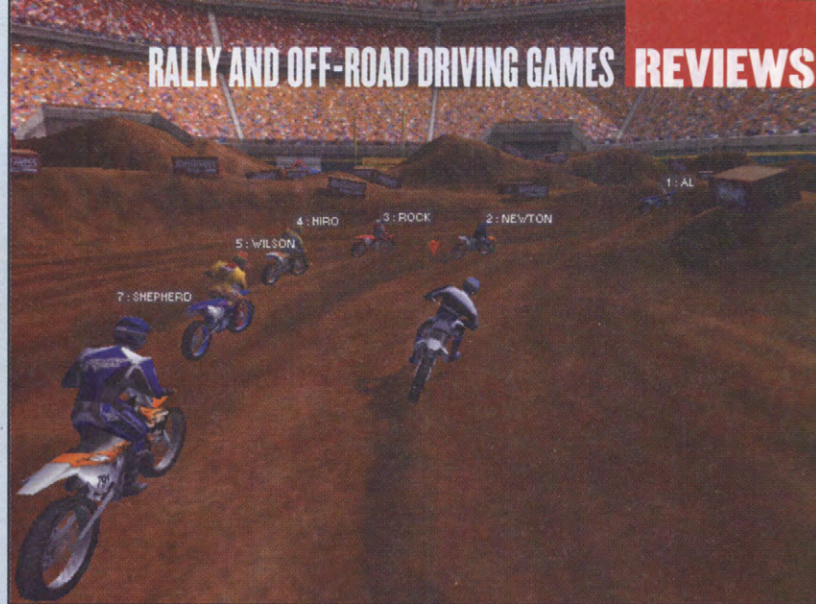
No trees in the stadium, thankfully.

MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

Dave: *Motocross Madness 2* is a completely different concept from the other games we've just been talking about. It might be off-road but it's two wheels instead of four and it's designed purely to be fun. There's nothing serious about jumping your bike 50ft into the air and spinning all over the place. When I first played it I thought it was really good fun, but I got bored of it after a while.
Keith: All you see is a view of the Earth from about 100 yards up

and that's basically what the game consists of.
Steve: You can change the camera if you like.
Keith: You can change the camera as much as you like, but basically you always end up looking at the game from high up.
Steve: That's because it's a top-down view. What do you expect them to do with an off-road game?
Chris: I actually prefer this to *Colin McRae*. It's so much more fun. It's a pure and simple arcade game. You don't have to mess about with car settings or worry about tyre pressure or arse about with different tyres to make sure you're set up for sand or gravel or any of that nonsense. You just jump on your bike and off you go. I much prefer arcade driving and

racing games to realistic ones, and there are probably a lot of people out there who feel the same way.
Steve: I don't think they've made the sequel any better. If anything, it's worse than the first one.
Chris: It's not worse than the first one, it just has more trees.
Steve: It doesn't feel any different from the first one.
Chris: But you liked the first one. So how can it be a bad thing if the second one's a bit like the first?

> ❝I like it, it's intuitive. So much easier to pick up and play than the rally games❞
> **CHRIS ON *MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2***

Steve: I'm not saying I don't like it. I just don't think they've done as much as they could to improve on the first one. They just put pointless stuff in it, like trees that get in the way.
Dave: They're really proud of their trees too. I went to America to see it and they were saying "Hey, look at these trees, if you want a field of these trees you got it".
Steve: That's another thing about *Rally Masters*, it's got 2D trees in it. When I went to one of those E3 shows in America the guy showing off *Rally Masters* was saying, "Man, those 2D trees are going to kill us."
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Dave: There was another motocross game that came out ages ago that's really arcadey. It was made by French people. I can't remember the name of it.
Chris: It was called *Motoracer* or

something like that.
Dave: That's the one, that was excellent. I loved that game.
Chris: Why aren't we doing that one in the Supertest instead then?
Dave: Because it's about three or four years old, it wouldn't be as good now.
Steve: I remember that, it was all right that one.
Keith: It had really oppressive gravity though, you could never take off.
Dave: It was really arcadey, the only way you could crash is if your bike hit the corner or you drove straight into a wall or something.
Steve: It was like being on rails sometimes.
Chris: So does everyone *think Motocross Madness 2* is a bit crap then?
Steve: It's not crap, it's probably the best motocross game out there, it's just not the best off-road game.
Chris: I like it, it's intuitive. So much easier to just pick up and play than the rally games.
Steve: I'd rather drive a pretend car than a pretend bike.
Dave: I don't like it. You get lost in the woods after about five minutes and then get bored. The only good thing about *Motocross Madness* is the multiplayer options – at least you get to race. There are all different kinds of races too – there's the gate to gate ones, and then there's the straight sort of bumps in the mud races. I think that's the technical name for those.
Steve: There's the off-road one and then there's the indoor one, the stadium one.
Dave: You have to wonder where they're going to go with

Motocross Madness from here, though. There's obviously going to be a third one. If all they can do is add more trees all the time there's not much point in them bothering. You won't be able to drive through them.
Chris: It might work if they put the bikes on proper courses that were a bit less freeform.
Steve: Well that's the problem with it, you never know where the hell you are.
Dave: They've got the stadium thing you can just drive round.
Chris: Maybe if they made the stadium bigger it would be better.
Dave: Or they could have a multi-genre racing game crossover. They could bring in big trucks, and rally cars, and sports cars, and slowly phase all the bikes out. Then it would be better. See that's the problem, they don't have the imagination to do something like that.
Chris: They don't have the imagination of the people who made *Lombard RAC Rally*.
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Chris: It's a really old game, and it was a bit crap, but it had one really good thing. You could go down all these hills, and they were so steep they made you feel

completely sick. It was excellent. Where have all the hills gone in these games? They don't make hills anymore.
Keith: They made some hills for *Rally Masters*. There's some really big hills in that game.
Chris: But they're not really steep.
Keith: Yes they are, you see some when you're going down mountains, they're gut-wrenching.
Martin: If you make them too steep it wouldn't be realistic.
Chris: I don't care about realism. I want hills. Steep ones. Realism is one of the worst things about driving games if you ask me.
Steve: That's a valid point.

➔

MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

The first game made a big splash when it first appeared on the racing game scene. Lush graphics and huge freeform landscapes were the hallmarks of a game that was designed purely for fun with no pretensions to realism. The sequel, unfortunately, turned out to be more of the same, with the notable addition of the now-famous trees that litter the courses.

ORIGINAL SCORE	
PUBLISHER	80%
DEVELOPER	Microsoft
REVIEWED	Microsoft
	PCZ #92

Loads of vehicles and every one can be satisfyingly smashed to pieces.

Insane is designed with hilarious multiplayer mayhem firmly in mind.

INSANE

Keith: This is the only game I've ever come across in my entire life that's like *Pilotwings* on the N64, apart from *Pilotwings* obviously.
Chris: Eh? *Insane* has cars in it, not wings.
Keith: Yes, would you like me to explain a bit further?
Chris: You'd probably better.
Keith: *Insane*'s got this amazing scoring system where you come first, second, third or fourth. Fourth place gets no points, first place gets ten points, and you get as many chances as you like to try and get first place. Earning a certain number of first places

opens up bonuses and secrets. So it's really well designed from that point of view.
Dave: It's got a lot of different game types in it. It's being pushed as a big multiplayer game and we've been playing it in the office. There are games like Destruction Zone, where the object of the game is just to smash other cars into little pieces, or you can stay in the zone and get points for that. It really is hilarious; you can knock bits off other cars. You can do a lot of damage – knock wheels off, knock bonnets off and literally end up with no car left.
We were doing the Destruction Zone and Richie ended up with just a chassis and one wheel and he just went round in circles.
Martin: It's the kind of game you play for completely different reasons than you play *Colin McRae*. It made us laugh so much. We literally couldn't play because we were in stitches.
Dave: There are loads of different vehicles too. Richie went for a big truck, someone else chose a normal car, and I managed to find a sort of hovercar. I didn't realise what it was at the time and I

INSANE
Insane has been designed from the ground up as a multiplayer title, and it shows. A huge selection of vehicles to choose from and massive tracks and courses make for a genuinely entertaining driving experience. If you could copyright the word 'fun' and put it in a box and sell it, its name would probably be *Insane*.

ORIGINAL SCORE	78%
PUBLISHER	Codemasters
DEVELOPER	Codemasters
REVIEWED	PCZ #97

careered off a cliff and never returned. But it goes back to what we were saying about fun against realism. This is probably the most fun game here but you would just play it once then not play it again for a few days. It's quite an empty experience.
Martin: It depends what you're looking for at the end of the day. If you want a game that just gets better and better and makes you want to go all the way through it this is probably not the game for you, but if you just want a really fun game, this is it.
Keith: Yes it depends completely on what you're looking for. The thing about *Insane* is that it doesn't follow any set pattern at all. None of the game modes are new – capture the flag is done in first-person shooters for example – but it's just all different stuff that you wouldn't normally find in a driving game. So from that point of view it's quite original.
Martin: It's like taking *Midtown Madness 2* and making an off-road game of it; it has the cops versus robbers thing.
Dave: It's actually better than *Midtown Madness* for that kind of thing.
Keith: It's got enormous wrap-around areas. There are no boundaries, you just drive wherever you want.
Dave: It's a game that's made us laugh more than any other game this year.
Chris: That was quite good Dave. They should have put that on the box. Steve, don't you have anything to say about *Insane*?
Steve: Yes it's good. It's got lots of steep hills.
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Steve: It's not a very good simulation. It's not very realistic. When I was a professional off-road racer it was nothing like that.
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Dave: It's got its own random

map generator, where you can get these really weird huge tracks. You can make your own but there's no point – you just get these huge wraparound areas with hills. That's the problem really, with something like *Midtown Madness* at least you have a city, and it's modelled and you have set objectives, but *Insane* is so open-ended it doesn't take too long to get bored of it.
Steve: You basically just follow the areas. Just look to see which way the arrow's pointing and follow it to the checkpoint.
Dave: You say follow the arrows, but the trick with *Insane* is knowing when a hill is coming up. If you take it too fast you've had it, so it's a case of slowing down and taking bounces properly.
Steve: It's just getting used to the handling.
Keith: All the vehicles handle very differently, that's one of the good things about it.
Dave: It's still hilarious though.

That's the biggest thing in its favour.
Chris: I think it's only £19.99 as well.
Dave: Well if it *is* £19.99, it's a bloody bargain.
Keith: The graphics aren't that good though, that's the only problem with it. You don't get any tyre marks or anything like that.
Martin: But that's probably because it's an online game. They had to keep the graphics to a

minimum to avoid slowdown.
Chris: Has anyone played it on the Internet yet?
Steve: I have. That's where I've been playing it. It's geared towards being on the Internet.
Dave: It's designed as an online game and it's the first game to use the new Codemasters multiplayer setup.
Chris: What's the connection like?
Keith: It's quite good. You can play it with a 56K modem. You get a little bit of lag but it doesn't make it unplayable.
Dave: It's clever, there are some sort of complicated calculations going on. Instead of getting lag like you do in a first-person shooter it just suddenly jumps a little bit and then resynchronises itself. It's like when you think there's a glitch in an online game but there isn't.
Chris: I think you've just described lag.
Everyone: (*laughs*)
Keith: Some of the maps in the game were ridiculous though.

> ❝It's got enormous wraparound areas. There are no boundaries, you drive wherever you want❞
>
> **KEITH ON** *INSANE*

They weren't particularly clever, they were just plain annoying.
Chris: You could say that about any online game. Even *Counter-Strike* has lots of dodgy maps.
Keith: Overall, I like it.
Dave: Well, we have two games in the Supertest that both concentrate on fun. *Motocross Madness 2* and *Insane*. And as far as I'm concerned *Insane* pisses all over *Motocross Madness 2*.
Chris: Agreed.
Martin: Couldn't have put it better myself.

ALSO-RANS

A run down of the best of the rest

There's no shortage of rally and off-road games for the PC. There is, however, a shortage of really good ones. Following is a list of games that were 'almost' good enough and 'nearly' made it into the Supertest. They won't rock your world, but you could do worse than pick them up for a tenner if you see them in your local games shop.

V RALLY 2

This game was successful on console due its obvious arcade leanings, but was not so convincing on PC alongside the illustrious *Colin McRae Rally* and co. Still a good game if you can get it cheap.

PRO RALLY 2001

Rally by numbers. If this had come out at any other time it would have been considered pretty good, but next to *Colin* it just can't hack it. Another competent but unexceptional game in a crowded genre.

SCREAMER 4X4

It's *Screamer*, it's off-road, but it's nothing to write home about. Graphical pop-up and extremely average gameplay make for a title that will quickly be forgotten, in fact, we've forgotten it already. *Screamer* who?

4X4 EVOLUTION

The first true cross-platform off-road game, which enabled you to play against Dreamcast and Mac players across the world. That was the only thing it was notable for though. In terms of playability and fun it's a pretty average title.

ALTERNATIVELY...

If you don't fancy getting your tires dirty

If rally and off-road games don't tickle your automotive fancy, you could do a lot worse than check out the games below. They are all currently sitting smugly in the *PC ZONE* Top 100 as games of choice for their particular racing genre.

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

This compulsively playable racer was one of those rare games that had the whole office playing when it first came out. Incredibly addictive arcade-style racing and great graphics make this a winner in every sense.

LE MANS 24 HOURS

Not as addictive as *MM2*, but a great driving game nonetheless, and if you really, really want to you can actually drive the whole 24-hour race yourself, should you be so inclined. There are other race modes too, of course, for those with a shred more sanity.

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000

Not as realistic or detailed as *GP3*, but what it lacks in realism *F1 Championship Season 2000* makes up in pure entertainment and thrills. The best F1 game on the PC to date, against some very tough competition.

GRAND PRIX 3

Everyone was waiting for the latest Geoff Crammond effort but when it arrived, although by no means a bad game, it wasn't the leap forward we were expecting. A more accurate name would have been *Grand Prix 2.5*, although hard-core F1 fans are still going to love every bit of it.

AND THE WINNER IS...

It came down to a choice between pure fun, and a perfect balance of depth and playability. The choice was clear, eventually

It seemed from the outset the decision would be unanimous. Much as we try not to be pre-judgmental when we enter into a new Supertest, there was the unspoken feeling that *Colin McRae* clearly had no competition. We were wrong. When it came to the crunch, *Colin* was obviously up there in the contenders for best game in the test, but so too was *Insane*. As much as we have respect for a developer who can create a title that accurately simulates a real-life sport, we have equal respect for a developer who can make a title that reminds us of how games used to

be: simple and loads of fun. Thus the attendees of the test hotly debated the merits of both of these titles, both sides arguing their point with equal conviction, and both with convincing arguments. In the end though, there could only be one winner, and we decided on balance that *Colin McRae*'s longevity and addictive qualities will ensure that you are playing it long after *Insane* is gathering dust in the cupboard. The mighty *Colin* triumphs again (not the real Colin, obviously), but it was a close race to the finish. Very close indeed.

OVERALL WINNER
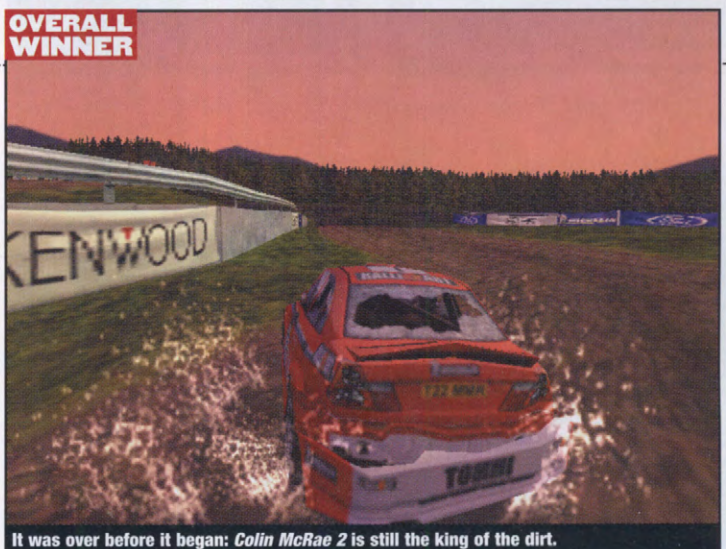
It was over before it began: *Colin McRae 2* is still the king of the dirt.

BUDGET ZONE

Life may be expensive, but games don't have to be

⭐ **TRAWLING THE BARGAIN BUCKET** Martin Korda (*Enemy Engaged: Comanche Vs Hokum* by Richie Shoemaker)

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

BEST BUY

⭐ £9.99 • Eidos • Out now

It was less than a year ago that *Thief II* found its way onto our desktops, so it's somewhat of a surprise that a game as good as this is already out on budget. Not that we're complaining. A prime example of a sneak 'em up, the whole concept behind *Thief II*'s brilliance is stealth and subtlety, rather than the use of violence. Faced with a series of missions, which generally involve breaking into well-guarded buildings and stealing certain items, you slowly start to uncover an intriguing plot, which is driven by some beautifully rendered cut scenes. There's bucket loads of tension and suspense, as you hide in shadows, creep up behind guards and knock them out. You also have to watch out for some cleverly hidden traps and alarms. Before each mission you have to equip yourself with all types of weaponry, from a simple club to water arrows, which let you extinguish torches from a huge distance. There are literally weeks of gameplay here, but only for the patient, as brains and stealth will always win over brute force. Glory boys need not apply. For everyone else though, this is one you have to buy.

PCZVERDICT   **83%**
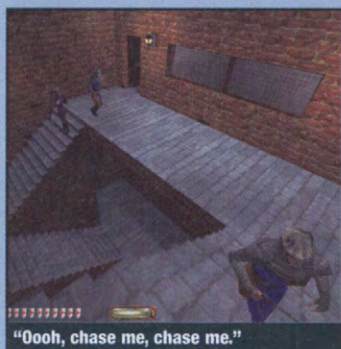
"Oooh, chase me, chase me."

"Erm, who goes there?"
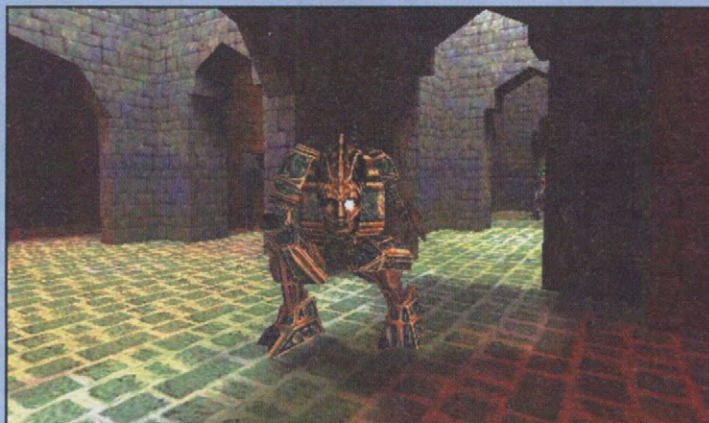
The plot deviates from standard sewage and gruel historical accuracy.

Crew animations are bettered only by the more recent *B-17 Flying Fortress*.

Better than *Gunship*? Oh yes.

ENEMY ENGAGED: COMANCHE VS HOKUM

⭐ £9.99 • Xplosiv • Out now

Superb value though they may be, the most annoying aspect of investing in reduced and repackaged games is that, more often than not, you don't get a manual. Not a printed one anyway.

In the case of *Enemy Engaged* this is an even bigger problem because the stuff on the CD is pretty useless, especially for flight sim newcomers. Thankfully, once half-mastered, such things become insignificant, as *Enemy Engaged* was and still is the finest helicopter combat sim, and at this price, it's even better.

As you would expect, it is the graphics that have dated the most, but it still looks reasonably good. There's a decent spread of difficulty settings and the AI is frighteningly realistic. The sound is also solid and for multiplayer fans there's plenty to keep you entertained until the next big chopper sim arrives, whatever and whenever that may be.

PCZVERDICT   **83%**

Very little puerile content here...

...and here, sorry.

AGE OF WONDERS

⭐ £9.99 • Xplosiv • Out now

An ancient saga of strategy, war and magic (according to the blurb on the box), *Age Of Wonders* is actually little more than an average action/strategy game for hardcore beardy-weirdies. Initially it's relatively entertaining. However, the turn-based combat system just seems archaic in this day and age, and it's not long until you start wondering if you could be spending your time on something more fulfilling, like counting the hairs on your arms. There's also a problem with *AOW*'s so-called research spells, which just end up giving away what you're going to discover next. If it had been released four or five years ago, it would have stood a chance. As it is, the only thing about it that's likely to make you sit up and take notice is the price.

PCZVERDICT   **53%**

The Last Revelation:
Not too shabby.

TOMB RAIDER:
THE LAST REVELATION

⊙ £9.99 • Eidos • Out now

After *Tomb Raider 3*, Core Design finally decided to update *Tomb Raider*'s graphics engine, and a damn fine job they did too, because even though the game is over a year old now, it's still looking great. *TR:TLR* sees everyone's favourite polygon travel to Egypt on another heroic quest to stop the forces of evil. After the somewhat over-long *TR3*, this offering feels more compact, and has a far greater emphasis on adventure elements than any of the previous games, without sacrificing anything in the action department. The engine overhaul has also addressed the problem of the suspect camera angles from which the previous games suffered, so there's no more guess work involved when you move Lara around tight corners. Enemies are varied and intelligent, and the puzzles are clever but rarely infuriating, making this one of the most enjoyable and playable action/adventures around. So go on, treat yourself. After all, it's less than a tenner.

PCZVERDICT   80%

Rubbish graphics, fun gameplay.

Chasing Tails...

SONIC R

⊙ £4.99 • Xplosiv • Out now

Sonic R is another £5 bargain, which would look more at home on a console. Based around Sega's world famous hedgehog, it's an arcade-style racer with power-ups and cutesy characters. However, rather than being the mindless pap you might expect, there is actually some substance to the gameplay, and you'll find that it takes a bit of mastering. *Sonic R* is fast and full of action, with some extremely taxing circuits.

It's just a shame that the graphics are so poor, as the split-screen and four-way games are a barrel of laughs. However, at this price, you can just about turn a blind eye to the somewhat suspect visuals.

PCZVERDICT   68%

MARTIAN GOTHIC
UNIFICATION

⊙ £9.99 • Xplosiv • Out now

If you mixed *Resident Evil* and *System Shock 2* with an unhealthy dose of crapness, you'd probably end up with something like this. Taking control of three characters, you must wander around a space station (which has some beautifully drawn locations), trying to solve the mystery of why the crew has been butchered. In an inspired stroke of unoriginality, you soon find that the culprits are a bunch of zombies intent on adding you to their victim list. The animation is laughable, and completely detracts from the wannabe-shit-your-pants atmosphere. What's more, the whole thing is made even more unscary because it's so hard to die, a problem caused by the enemy AI, which verges on incompetent. Throw in some unconvincing dialogue and you're left with a game that has little going for it, even at this price.

PCZVERDICT   30%

"Anyone else wanna get in my way?"

"Woops, sorry dad."

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

⊙ £4.99 • Xplosiv • Out now

If you've played one game like this you've played them all. *The House Of The Dead* is an arcade-style blaster in which you have to shoot hordes of zombies that jump out at you while at the same time avoiding blowing away innocent civilians. Although you can play with a mouse or a keyboard, the only true way to enjoy this is with a lightgun.

While *THOTD* is more suited to consoles, it's just as much fun to play on your PC, and for a mere five quid, you could do a whole lot worse than picking up a copy, as playing the game with a friend is superb, if totally mindless, fun.

PCZVERDICT   70%

Shoot, shoot, shoot.

Reload.

Shoot, shoot, shoot.

Reload, shoot.
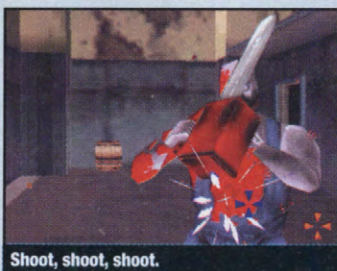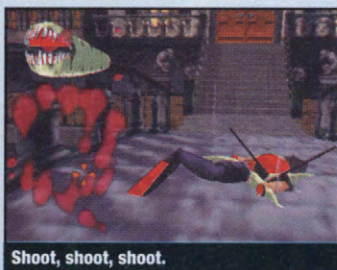
FEEDBACK

Yes, it's another opportunity for you to make your views heard.
Martin Korda does his best to sound understanding

COUNTER-STRIKE

REVIEWED #98, January 2001
SCORE 93%

What we thought

"Above everything else, above the simplicity of the game, the intuitive nature of the controls and the surprising fluidity with which it plays online, *CS*'s true genius... is that it pisses off Mac owners like you wouldn't believe."

What you said

⊕ Well you finally did it. Your constant ravings about *Counter-Strike* made me decide to play it, and I have to thank you very much, as after some initial disappointment I am now enjoying this game a great deal. But I do have a couple of points to make.

I think that the best thing the game designers could do to improve the gameplay is to disable jumping. I know that this is a major part of people's tactics, but without it the game would become much more realistic and I

think would improve. I think it looks absurd seeing all those Special Forces soldiers jumping around the screen like ballerinas. I'm sure that a lot of people will probably disagree, but tough, that's just what I think. I have terrible visions of military training bases all over the world teaching the devastating new tactic of jumping.

Stuart Laver

⊕ Just to let you know, *Counter-Strike* is available in the UK, mainly in Gameplay's new retail stores. I managed to pick it up in the *Half Life: Generations* compilation and am hooked. Thank goodness for flat rate Internet access. This is a fantastic game that has bags of playability, atmosphere and tension. My only gripe is that if you have a

poor ping you generally have no chance of survival or killing anyone. Right, back to my perch with sniper rifle.

Thurstan Johnston

⊕ I have to say that when I first decided to move away from manic, free-for-all FPS's and give *Counter-Strike* a go, I hated it. I couldn't seem to get the weapons I wanted and ended up getting mowed down in seconds. Seven games and no frags later, I decided to call it a night. The following afternoon I had the strange urge to play again, this time managing to plant the occasional bomb, free the occasional hostage, drive the occasional APC-load of troops into an enemy base, running down terrorists on the way. And believe me, once you get into *Counter-Strike*, it's out of this world. From the second you see that first enemy hit the ground you become a slave to the game. In fact it's so addictive that I changed my ISP to BT Internet just to dodge some of the call charges (BT is fast enough to be used on Wireplay and you get free off-peak time). The only problem is that you can lose yourself for hours while playing. I have tons of work these days so I had to ban myself from playing during the week. It's not easy, believe me.

Goatmaster

Comment

Goatmaster, your self-discipline is enough to make a Buddhist monk blush. *Counter-Strike* is the most addictive, entertaining and compelling online shooter ever, and with the exception of one dissenter last month, we've had no other letters of complaint about it whatsoever. With Internet charges getting ever smaller, and access rates ever faster, more and more people will be spending more and more time on this game. The world will grind to a halt. Agriculture will dwindle, the stock markets will crash and people will shrivel in

their chairs as they refuse to eat or drink for fear of missing the next game. But for a game as good as this, surely it's a small price to pay.

And on a final note... I see what you're getting at Stuart. However, I don't think disabling the jump option would improve the game, in fact I think it would make it less enjoyable. For starters, how would you get into vents or climb over crates? Even though it's a very realistic game, you have to remember that these jumping special forces soldiers are being controlled by human players, and that's just the way they play – probably to make themselves harder to hit, and I'm afraid their balletic prances are just something we all have to put up with.

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

REVIEWED #98, January 2001
SCORE 82%

What we thought

"*Escape From Monkey Island* is an enjoyable, professionally created and reasonably funny game."

What you said

⊕ Having just this minute (I kid you not) finished *Escape From Monkey Island*, I have to say I totally agree with your review score. While not as difficult (or long) as *Grim Fandango*, it is certainly the funniest game I've played for a long while. There are lots of *Star Wars* jibes in there and at one point a wonderful piss-take of *Titanic*. If there is one problem, though, you really need to have played the previous games to be able to fully enjoy it. But when you get to take part in 'Monkey Kombat', who's complaining?

David Mather

⊕ I'm sure many adventure gamers wrote in and complained about your treatment of the genre within your review. You continually moan about the lack of traditional adventure games, and the over-abundance of *Tomb Raider*-style action/adventures,

Taking aim on your free time.

Counter-Strike: dangerously addictive stuff.

yet when a classic like *EFMI* arrives, you say that it's more of the same and give it 82 per cent. The game's got hilarious humour, superb acting, logical puzzles, brilliant animation, good-looking graphics, a carefully scripted story line, plenty of monkeys, and Murray the Evil Skull as a bouncer. What more does an adventure game need? Look at your downers: "Relies too much on the originals", but nowhere near as much as *Curse Of Monkey Island*. "Doesn't add anything new"? Neither did *Grim Fandango*, yet it's still your benchmark, and *EFMI* is slightly better.

Chris "The Tingler" Capel

Comment
Although I'm not completely convinced that the formula for a great adventure game involves having loads of monkeys in it, your points do throw up several issues of contention Chris. The reason we gave *Escape From Monkey Island* 82 per cent was because in general it borrows very heavily from the previous games in the series. As David says, you really need to have played the first three to fully appreciate this game, which just goes to show how reliant it is on those prequels. *Grim Fandango,* however, was packed full of originality and its surreal story line and strong characters still makes it the finest adventure game of all time. We're ecstatic that after all these years we've finally got a decent new

adventure game, but that doesn't mean we're going to foul ourselves with excitement and call it the best adventure of all time, because quite frankly it's not. Mark has played just about every adventure game around so he knows his stuff, and his comment that there are too many action/adventure games and not enough adventures was totally justified, just take a look at the action/adventure section in our Top 100.

PROJECT IGI

REVIEWED #97, Christmas 2000
SCORE 85%

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

What we thought
"What sets *IGI* apart is the sense of immersion within a believable story line."

What you said
❂ *Project IGI* – what an excellent game. It's like playing *Thief II* in the modern day. The combination of great graphics and sound along with a decent story line (something lacking in the majority of today's games) makes this a game not to be missed. I got a real feeling of suspense when sneaking around. During combat the action is as good as anything else I've ever played. However I do have two minor moans: 1) The enemy AI could have been slightly better; and, 2) You can't save mid-mission. I found this lack of a save option extremely annoying. I just hope that there'll be a patch which

lets you save during the game really soon.

R.Bamborough

❂ I wonder how long the reviewer played this game for? 85 per cent? "Thinking man's FPS"? What a laugh. Although enjoyable, it's hardly ground-breaking. The enemies' AI is appalling. The man next to you gets his head blown off and you just stand there? Or does this simulate shock? A stream of bullets just misses you and ricochets off the wall next to

The latest *Monkey Island* jaunt is a bit short on originality.

Another game of William Tell ends in tragedy.

you – you stiffen for a moment, realise it's a flashback from 'Nam and relax again. The phrase Turkey Shoot springs to mind.

And then there's the respawning of the enemy. You set the alarms off and an endless supply of guards stream out of what might only be described as a garden shed for the bourgeoisie. So what do you do? If you can't reach the alarm switch (which, incidentally, suddenly lulls the enemy into complacency despite you having just kebabed half the garrison) you try and secure it as follows: (a) go inside (b) kill anyone inside so that (c) people will stop coming out of it and you can get back to the mission. But oh no. Parts 'a' and 'b' work fine until you turn your back and suddenly a guard teleports into the room behind you and shoots you. Great.

The realistic approach to damage modelling was a breath of fresh air for games of this type, and makes the game harder and more realistic. However, with bugs like the ones I've mentioned, and no mid-level save feature, the game simply doesn't work.

It could have been an excellent game with a patch to correct these problems, and if they released one, maybe I'd buy it again. In the meantime I'll stick to *Starship Troopers,* which is much more fun.

Duncan Mellonie

Comment
Duncan, where does all this bitterness come from? Tell me about your parents. Actually there's no time for all that, so let's just concentrate on your criticisms of the game. Respawning enemies? I had a word with Richie (the reviewer) and he said that he saw nothing like this throughout the course of the entire game – yes he completed it, although that's not to say that it doesn't happen. We were a bit baffled by your comments about stiffening when someone next to you gets shot, but I suppose we all get stimulated in different ways by these things.

I have to admit, we do share your views on the AI, which is occasionally on the dodgy side, appearing to be dumbed down and slightly too basic. This was possibly done on purpose to make the game easier to complete, because in the earlier version we played, the AI seemed far sharper and much more challenging. Just about every letter that we've received this month has complained about the lack of an in-game save option. It's a totally valid point, as dying ten metres away from the end of a level is one of the most infuriating things that can happen to a gamer. Perhaps an in-game save point would have made *IGI* too easy, but surely Eidos could have put three or four save points in each level to spare us all the chore of having to wade through the entire thing again. PCZ

Project IGI immerses you in a world where enemy soldiers just happen to be really stupid. Where's the problem?

GADGETS

The most expensive radio in the world, along with the most expensive mouse? Not quite, but not far off...

> ◑ One of the funkiest gadgets we've had the fortune to review.

THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM DUAL POWER GAMEPAD

◑ £29.99 • Guillemot • 020 8686 5600 • www.thrustmaster.co.uk

> ◑ It's cheap and it rumbles. Pretty damn good it is too.

Bit of an odd one this. On paper, Thrustmaster's new gamepad has a lot to offer. With 13 programmable buttons, including six triggers, a standard D-Pad and two analogue controllers, it's taken the kitchen sink approach to game controllers. It also boasts two motors inside, which rumble (although not as strongly as you'd like) to provide the sort of directional effects that used to be reserved for the PlayStation massive. Plus, at £29.99, it's a bit of a steal. So far, so good.

The design leaves a bit to be desired, though. For a start, the D-Pad is a bit loose, and we prefer a bigger depression to get our thumbs into. Although it feels very sturdy, the overall ambience is solid and workmanlike rather than aesthetic and ergonomic. When you get so much right it always seems odd to fall down on a couple of minor hurdles. These aside, the Firestorm is still a top quality pad and well worth the asking price. ●●●●○

WAVEFINDER

◑ £299 • Psion • 020 7317 4100 • www.wavefinder.com

Proper gadgets pulsate with light, and on this scientific basis the Psion WaveFinder counts as an über-gizmo. This revolutionary digital radio tuner plugs into a spare USB port and uses your CPU to decode DAB (Digital Audio Broadcast) transmissions, which are captured on its snazzy screw-on antennae. In the process, the white blob in the middle pulsates with ever changing hues of colour. All we need is a floatation tank and we're off...

It might seem like a lot of money, but the WaveFinder is considerably cheaper than most, and it offers the ability to record from the radio straight to your hard drive in MP3 format. Given the WaveFinder is essentially software driven, the tuner software seems likely to be developed further – a timer function to record programmes while you're away from your PC would be nice.

DAB coverage is improving steadily, and the choice of radio stations is excellent, particularly in metropolitan areas. The audio quality is superb, far better than FM radio. In fact, the only quality problems lie with the smaller stations – can someone tell Ministry Of Sound that turning the broadcast volume up to 11 so the digital signal clips horribly isn't a good idea? ●●●●○

> ◑ The best mouse in world. Have we said that before?
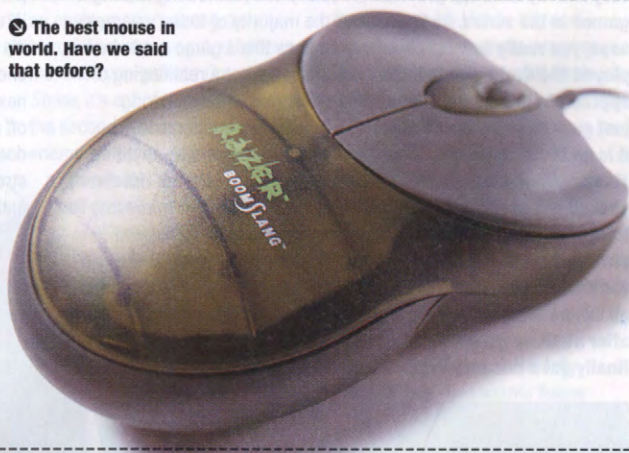
DVDS

NOSFERATU SPECIAL EDITION

£19.99 • 12 cert • Eureka Video
A 1922 horror classic, this is a movie you nearly didn't get to see. It was the first film to be based on Bram Stoker's character, and as such it was subject to a court case that ended with the judge ordering all copies to be burnt. Luckily they weren't, although you're going to have to be a dedicated horror fan to sit through a silent black and white film (although you also get a sepia option with this special two-disc set), notable for the amazing facial expressions of Max Schreck and his still-eerie rise from the coffin. One for collectors.
DVD EXTRAS
Commentary • Artwork and postcards • The Origins Of Vampires ●●●●○
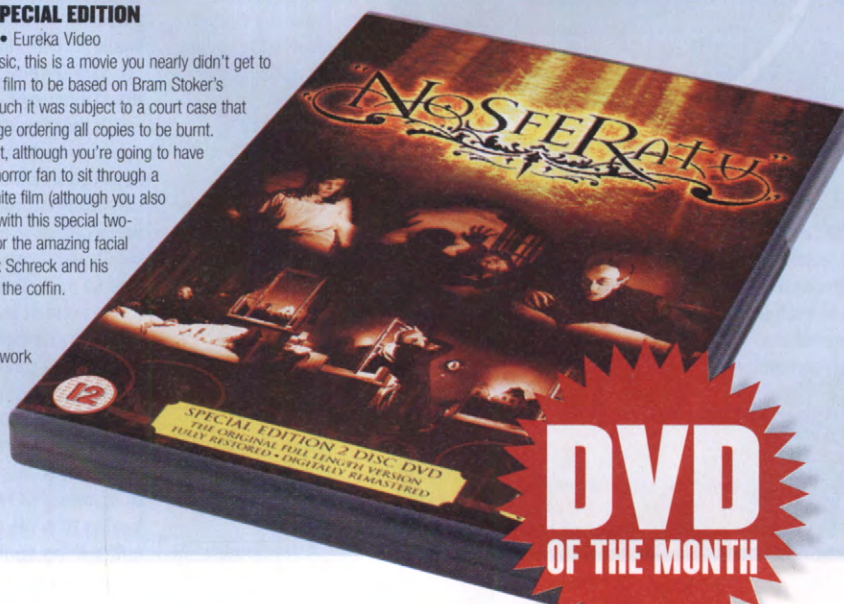
U-571

£13.49 • 12 cert • Eureaka Video
Although creative license has been taken with the story, you can understand why, as the true account of the Allied capture of the German Enigma code machine is actually quite dull. What is less understandable is why this supposed blockbuster looks like a telemovie. Harvey Keitel as the wisened old sea dog is perhaps the worst bit of casting here, and while there are some passable underwater effects, the big explosion at the end is laughable. As director Jonathan Mostow reveals, *U-571* attempts to recapture the tension of undersea classics such as *Run Silent, Run Deep* and *Above Us The Waves*. Wisely, the director omits comparisons with *Das Boot*, a far superior film in almost every respect, and while *U-571* gets by on its deep sea tension and semi-star cast, it is nothing more than a tribute film.
DVD EXTRAS Director's commentary • *Making Of* featurette • *The Enigma* featurette ●●○○○

DVD OF THE MONTH

VIDEO BLASTER WEBCAM GO PLUS

⭐ £149 • Creative Labs • www.europe.creative.com

Let's forget all the fantastic features that the Video Blaster WebCam claims to have for a minute, and concentrate on what really matters – the fact that it doesn't look like a bloody golf ball that's been inadvertently placed on top of your monitor. And due to this fact, you're instantly saved the expense of accidentally teeing off with it on a Sunday morning…

On a more technical note, the Video Blaster WebCam does what it says on the tin, but it's also a sleek-looking but somewhat cheapo still-frame and motion-video camera, which you can take off with you on your travels and use as a straight digital camera.

If you've got relatives abroad you can use it to see and talk to them over the Net, but don't expect to see any great facial detail or lip synching. You'll have to wait a few years for the future of communication. The still picture quality is relatively sharp and it's generally pretty simple to use, but unfortunately the motion-video capture is – to be frank – pretty crap, due to a poor frame rate. Webcams aren't renowned for quality – cost is a bigger consideration, but if that's what you're after then there are cheaper models available. ✪✪✪✪✪

A web cam and a digital camera in one neat little package.

RAZER BOOMSLANG 2000

⭐ £69.99 • Labtec • 01256 386 000 • www.razer.com

You might have heard of this mouse before. Used extensively by some of the best players in the world, the Boomslang has finally been picked up by UK outfit Labtec, which means that before too long you should be able to nip into a shop and swap £70 for your very own über-mouse.

For the not-inconsiderable outlay you get a left/right-handed USB or PS/2 mouse whose claim to fame is that it's four times as sensitive as the one you're currently struggling with. The excellent drivers enable you to change sensitivity on the fly, and the whole thing is crafted with beautiful precision. The only problem is that it takes a bit of getting used to. In order to counter the increased sensitivity, the ball is located towards the back of the mouse, which means that you use your wrist more than your fingers, resulting in a seemingly subtle but radically different approach to mouse-work. It's worth the effort though. Quite simply, this is the best mouse you can use with an FPS, and if you're looking to squeeze an extra few drops out of your game this is the way to get it. ✪✪✪✪✪

WIN! CHALLENGE US AND GET ONE OF THESE SEE PAGE 98

P1500 RUMBLE PAD

⭐ £39.99 • Saitek • 01454 451900 • www.saitek.co.uk

Rumbles-are-us this month, with another shaker, this time from Saitek, although we might as well say up-front that this doesn't compare favourably to Thrustmaster's offering. For a start it looks pig-ugly, and it only comes with a single analogue stick, compared to Thrustmaster's two. In place of the second, Saitek has stuck a big piece of silver, that looks as if it's supposed to do something – but it doesn't.

More importantly, it's also £10 more expensive than Thrustmaster's pad, and we had trouble getting the rumble effects to kick in with certain games. *Colin McRae Rally 2* for example, recognised the stick, but refused to play ball with the shake-rattle-and-roll.

Still, in other games it was fine and if the Thrustmaster hadn't poked its budget nose into this month's gadgets the P1500 might have scored a bit better. ✪✪✪✪✪

Another rumble pad, but a bit more expensive and not as good. Shame.

BUY ONLINE FROM www.softwarefirst.com (01268 531 222)

BRAVEHEART

£18.99 • 15 cert • 20th Century Fox

Set during Scotland's brutal 13th-century battle for independence, *Braveheart* sees Mel Gibson pop on a kilt and play legendary highland leader William Wallace, as well as directing. The cinematography, music and moving story touchingly depict the Scottish struggle against English aggression, and the battles are some of the most impressive and bloody ever seen on celluloid. With a fantastic bonus disk thrown in for good measure, you'd have to be aa mad dog or an Englishman to miss out on this blockbuster.

DVD EXTRAS Bonus disk featuring Mel Gibson's *Braveheart: A Film Maker's Passion* documentary • Audio commentary by Mel Gibson. Interactive menus • Scene Access • Original theatrical trailer • Multiple language subtitles
✪✪✪✪✪

THE COLOR OF MONEY

£19.99 • 15 cert • Touchstone

It might seem like a strange decision for Martin Scorsese to follow up his classics *Raging Bull* and *The King Of Comedy* with a sequel to *The Hustler* – 25 years after the original – but while it's not up there with his best work, it still features his signature imaginative camera work and perfect pacing. Paul Newman reprises his role as the pool hustler 'Fast' Eddie Nelson, and it is the study of his character and his quest to recapture the magic of his youth that drives the film forward more than his relationship with a young and overbearing Tom Cruise.

The second part of the film after Newman – who won an Oscar for his role – and Cruise have parted ways is considerably less interesting, but you'll still want to spend all day playing *Virtual Pool 3*.

DVD EXTRAS None
✪✪✪✪✪
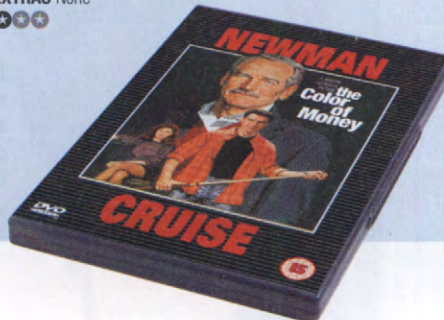
THE ICE STORM

£15.99 • 15 cert • Buena Vista

Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm* told us what was going on with the American dream long before *American Beauty* came on the scene. The adultery, deceit and betrayal of two seemingly normal '70s American families come to a head on the night of one of the worst ice storms to hit America for 30 years. Some extremely powerful performances (including those by Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver, Christina Ricci, Tobey Maguire and Joan Allen), neatly portray this quiet drama about the loss of innocence and the harshness of reality. It's definitely thought provoking, if a little depressing.

DVD EXTRAS None
✪✪✪✪✪
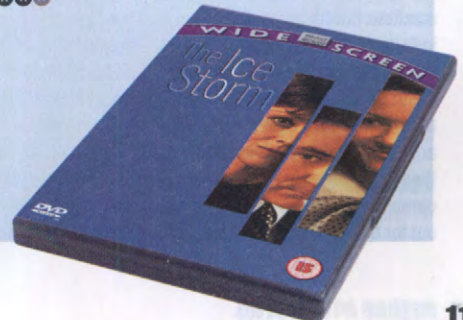
HARDWARE

⭐ **WORDS** Tim Ponting

VIDEOLOGIC VIVID! 32MB

⚫ VideoLogic Vivid! 32Mb • £99, inc VAT • VideoLogic (01923) 277488 • **www.videologic.com**

VideoLogic's new 3D card is on the shelves at a budget price. How does it compare with the big boys?

General | Adapter | Monitor | Performance
Color Management | Display | 3D Optimisation

This page lets you turn some of the card's advanced features on or off, to fine-tune the way it accelerates games. Click Help for more information on these features.

Profile:
Global

Direct3D | OpenGL

Advanced Settings
☐ Allow Software Rasterisation
☐ Disable External Depth Buffer
☑ Enable Depth Buffer Storing
☑ Enable Asynchronous Depth Buffer Access
☑ Enable Stencil Buffer Storing
☑ Enable Asynchronous Stencil Buffer Access

Look out for a massive 3D card round-up next issue.

We've had our hands on this card for quite a few months now – you may remember from our Hercules 3D Prophet II MX review that we were waiting for the drivers to be finished before reviewing it. At that time, Vivid! resolutely refused to support OpenGL properly in an AMD K6-III machine, hence our reluctance to review when the drivers were still being tweaked.

However, the Vivid! has now been released, with the drivers still in 'work in progress' state. It still won't work in our K6-III machine, but happily seems fine in just about everything else – a Pentium III and two different Slot A and Socket A Athlons. However, there is no doubt that new drivers are being worked on, though these are not yet in the public domain. With this in mind, watch out for the next graphics card round-up, when hopefully the drivers and BIOS of Vivid! will be in optimised condition. Until then, we are working with BIOS 1.80 and driver version 1.0.4, dating back to last September, still the only version downloadable from VideoLogic's website.

Vivid! uses the Kyro chipset from STMicroelectronics and is designated a PowerVR Series 3 device – earlier PowerVR cards used NEC chipsets. It uses the same design ethic as earlier VR cards, namely to use clever techniques rather than brute force

⬆ **Cheap and extremely cheerful, just like Tim.**

to obtain faster frame rates in games, in theory at least, allowing it to use cheaper components than its peers, in this case the low-end 32Mb NVIDIA and ATI Radeon boards. Its core and memory run at just 115MHz, compared with 160+MHz for MX and Radeon cards.

Vivid! uses a technique known as 'tile-based rendering' to reduce the memory bandwidth required to render a scene on-screen. Most 3D accelerators employ so-called 'immediate rendering' – every polygon within a scene is rendered, whether it's obscured by another polygon in front of it or not. In other words, every single pixel is textured and shaded, then the Z-Buffer is consulted to see whether it's 'in front' and needs to be drawn. This is a simple, effective, but hugely wasteful way of rendering a scene as it sucks up video memory bandwidth like a hoover on steroids.

'Tile based' rendering, in contrast, first divides the screen into tiles. Before anything else happens, surfaces which aren't visible within the tile are removed; only then are the individual pixels textured, shaded and drawn on screen. In this way, complex scenes can be rendered using far less memory bandwidth. Hence, Vivid! can get away with slower – and cheaper – SDR as opposed to DDR RAM. Nothing shows the benefits of tile-based rendering better than VideoLogic's own 'VillageMark' – a benchmark that utilises a hugely complex scene that requires huge amounts of 'overdraw' by most cards, including fast GeForces. Vivid! annihilates it's competitors in this test. In other benchmarks, it performs roughly as you'd expect for a 'budget' card, in my own tests slightly slower across the board in both Direct3D and OpenGL tests than my 32Mb GeForce256 DDR card – but then it does cost £50 less. Unfortunately, I didn't have a GeForce2 MX card to hand which would be an interesting comparison they are the same price – wait for next month's roud-up for that particular shoot out.

Vivid! is an interesting product designed with future games in mind. It excels at rendering complex scenes in 32-bit colour (with proper 32-bit textures too) and as it works internally in 32-bit, 16-bit results are vastly improved too. It is full of clever techie quirks, such as its full eight-layer multi-texturing support, the maximum allowed by DirectX – this means that if objects have loads of textures overlaid, it won't force a second rendering pass – and proper Environment Mapped Bump Mapping (using textures to make objects look lumpy). Image quality is generally excellent, though I found half second 'freezes' in some D3D games such as *Project IGI* – not sure why, but a few other users have reported the same.

Until the new drivers are available to the public, it's difficult to recommend this board above its competitors. However, with the recent drop to £99, Vivid! is now as cheap or cheaper than its MX counterparts – and the new drivers may well give it a performance lead. Unlike its predecessor the Neon 250, Vivid! has enormous potential, as do its successors. And rumour has it they're on the way...

PCZVERDICT **85%**

HERCULES GAME THEATER XP

★ Hercules GameTheater XP • £149, inc VAT • Guillemot (020) 8686 5600 • **www.hercules-uk.com**

A nifty all-in-one sound solution, based around the same chipset as the VideoLogic SonicFury.

⊘ A stomping performance, but a bit too expensive.

When Guillemot acquired Hercules, the latter's brand was synonymous with high-quality graphics cards – hence Guillemot was all too happy to use it for every subsequent video card release. Now it's hoping that the brand magic will rub off on its new audio product, Game Theater XP – the first ever sound card to be released from the Hercules stable.

Not that this is any 'Plain Jane' sound card. The XP consists of a tiny PCI card, connected via a two metre cable fatter than Rosanne's wrist to a breakout box with a bewildering array of input and output connectors: stereo phono in, microphone in (with gain control), S/P-DIF digital in and out on both optical and coaxial connectors, MIDI in and out – plus audio socketry for connection to 5.1 amplification (front left and right, rear left and right, centre and subwoofer). Oh, and a headphone output with volume control.

Rather niftily, Hercules has also squeezed a traditional joystick port into the box, and more significantly a four-way USB hub. If your PC has two USB ports already, one of them feeds this hub, leaving the other one still available – five in all. As I use a USB mouse, ADSL modem, joystick and digital radio, this hub is extremely handy.

Internally, you can connect your DVD-ROM to the card for CD playback, plus there's yet another Aux in connection. And another Line in on the card spine. Enough already?

The sound card itself is based on the superb Crystal 4630 SoundFusion DSP – as used by the VideoLogic SonicFury (91 per cent in *PC ZONE* November 2000). Broadly speaking, the GameTheater XP offers the same facilities as the SonicFury, but with more convenient connections and a USB hub. The Crystal DSP is reconfigurable in software and provides hardware support for a variety of audio services – accelerating up to 96 DirectSound 3D streams, up to 64 hardware MIDI voices and offering support for Sensaura and EAX 2.0 3D audio APIs. It also emulates support for the A3D 1.0 3D audio standard, but now Aureal is no more, Sensaura is the way forward – and as the DSP is reconfigurable in software, it will support future Sensaura innovations as they're introduced, provided Hercules keep the drivers up-to-date.

Installation of the XP proved straightforward enough – bung the card in, connect the breakout box, switch on and install the drivers. However, after rebooting, the computer blue-screened...

Eventually, it became clear the XP USB hub was incompatible with the Alcatel USB modem, which worked fine when connected to the PC's own spare port. On many Athlon-based PCs, USB problems are Windows 98's fault, but in this case the processor was an Intel PIII, hence the problem clearly lies with the XP. Not a big deal as other USB devices worked fine, but damn annoying nonetheless.

The card's set up options are accessed from a control panel launched from the System Tray in the bottom of your screen. This seemed to work fine, including a test utility for balancing surround sound speakers.

Hercules bundles CyberLink PowerDVD 3.0 with XP – with both Dolby Digital decoding and Dolby Headphone support. You'll need a hefty processor to make use of these audio functions unless you have a DVD decoder card to handle the video processing – a PIII-500 was not up to the task of performing both, although a 1GHz Athlon breezed it.

Once the GameTheater was up and running, we fell in love with it. It's beautifully engineered, has easy-to-use connections (but the fat cable is still too fat) and the in-game performance rocks bells. However, it's nearly twice the price of the simpler SonicFury, which itself is perfectly adequate for most gamers. If you want the best, go with Hercules, but if money is an object, stick with the VideoLogic card.

PCZVERDICT   **83%**

Game Theater XP Properties

General | MIDI | S/PDIF | Equalizer | **Speakers** | Mixer | Help

Speaker Configuration
- ○ 5.1 Speakers (Front, surround, center and subwoofer speakers connected)
- ○ 4 Speakers (Front and surround speakers connected)
- ○ Stereo on 4 speakers (Front and surround speakers connected)
- ● 2 Speakers (Main speakers connected)
- ○ Headphones

Speaker Level Adjustement

100% 0%   Left   Center   Right

100% 0%   Surround Left   Surround Right   Sub/Woofer

Auto rotating

Test

You see that figure in white? That's you that is.

BUYER'S GUIDE

Welcome to *ZONE*'s first Hardware Buyer's Guide, a regular monthly insight into the hottest upgrades for your PC. If you're looking for high performance, check the left hand column, while the not so wealthy should peruse the right hand side of the page. Your guide: *Tim Ponting*

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY
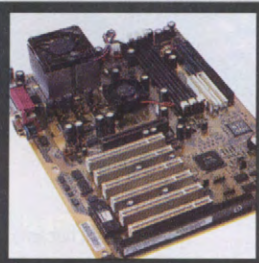
ABIT KT-7A RAID
STREET PRICE £150, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER ABIT
TELEPHONE (01438) 741999   **WEBSITE** www.abit.nl/english

This first Hardware Buyer's Guide will feature quite a bit of kit from the Christmas upgrade feature in *PC ZONE* #98. In this case, however, there's been an upgrade in the hardware from the KT-7 RAID to the KT-7A RAID from Abit. This adds support for 266MHz Front Side Bus (FSB) 'C'-type Athlons. Why are we not recommending next-gen AMD or Intel-based systems with DDR/RAMBUS memory? Because currently, the speed benefits are tiny compared with the extra cost. We like the Abit motherboard for its ATA-100 support (faster hard drive performance) and over-clocking potential. The chipset also has its own fan.

BEST BUDGET
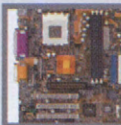
GIGABYTE GA-7ZM
STREET PRICE £90 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE (01908) 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

This is basically a sawn-off equivalent of our preferred motherboard, utilising the older chipset version (VIA KT133) and in Micro-ATX format – one AGP and three PCI slots. It'll take both Athlon and Duron Socket A processors of varying speeds, so has upgrade potential. I've used GB motherboards for years and found them the best of the cheaper brands.

PROCESSOR

BEST BUY
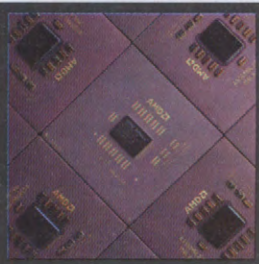
AMD 1.2GHZ ATHLON
STREET PRICE £250
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE (01276) 803100   **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

AMD has achieved the unthinkable, toppling Intel from both the performance and price-performance perch simultaneously. We really can't find any reason for gamers to embrace Intel unless you're upgrading into an existing motherboard, in which case you'll have no choice. The 1.2GHz Athlon is a screamer, and surprisingly cheap at around £250. In the bad old days, Intel's top processors set you back more than £500. How a bit of competition has changed things… As Athlons over 1GHz are available only in Socket A configuration, make sure you've got the right motherboard. You'll also need to fit a hefty fan to keep it cool.

BEST BUDGET
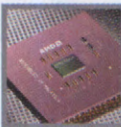
AMD 800MHZ DURON
STREET PRICE £75 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE (01276) 803100
WEBSITE www.amd.com

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This reduces overall performance somewhat, but still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed that makes AMD processors the choice for gaming.

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY

IBM DESKSTAR 75GXP 30MB
STREET PRICE £120, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER IBM
TELEPHONE (0800) 169 1458   **WEBSITE** www.storage.ibm.com

I find it hard to believe that you can buy a 30Gb ATA-100 hard drive for £120 – particularly one as excellent as IBM's Deskstar 75GXP. Mine sits in the heart of a hard disk recording system for music – which needs fantastic performance and unquestionable reliability, both of which it delivers. It has a rotational speed of 7,200 RPM (faster than some but slower than others – a good compromise between price and performance) and an average seek time of less than 8.5ms. If 30Gb ain't big enough for you, the range extends to a whopping 75Gb, though you'll need around £310 for such a beast.

BEST BUDGET

SEAGATE U SERIES 5 20GB
STREET PRICE £80, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE (01628) 890366 **WEBSITE** www.seagate.com

It's tough these days finding a drive that doesn't offer an ATA-100 interface – in fact, all the decent ATA-66 drives cost more than their ATA-100 equivalents! Seagate's fabulous ATA-100 U Series 5 drives redefine budget performance, featuring 5,400 RPM platters with a sub 9ms seek time. The 20Gb drive is a good compromise between price and capacity.

MONITOR

BEST BUY

IIYAMA VISION MASTER PRO 510 22IN
STREET PRICE £720
MANUFACTURER Iiyama
TELEPHONE (01438) 745482   **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

I've been a devotee of Iiyama products for years – both my monitors at home are Iiyamas, both are comparatively old yet as good as new. The Vision Master Pro 510 has a stunning 22in screen (albeit with only around 20in of it visible). The tube is a Mitsubishi Diamondtron NF (Natural Flat), arguably the best performing flat screen CRT for the money currently available. Of all the large screen monitors we've come across recently, it's the best all-rounder, with a tight focus right to the screen corners and fabulous colour purity. It also features Iiyama's own Anti-Glare coating, and a maximum resolution of 2,048x1,536!

BEST BUDGET

HANSOL 710P 17IN
STREET PRICE £160, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE (01252) 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer in need of a monitor, Hansol is a company well worth a look. There is nothing naff at all about the 710P – yet it still has a fabulously low price for the specification. It will handle 1,024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1,600x1,200 at a creditable 75Hz. For the money there's not a lot that'll touch this.

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUY
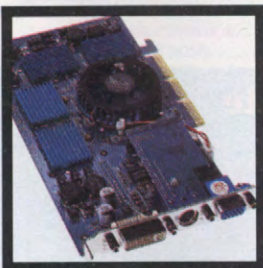
HERCULES 3D PROPHET II ULTRA
STREET PRICE £380, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600   WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

You may wonder why a video card that scored a relatively modest 75 per cent when reviewed a couple of months ago should be our video card of choice. The answer is simple: if price is no object, then this is an unbeatable product. Based on the NVIDIA GeForce2 core, clocked in this case at 250MHz, it also features 64Mb of Double Data Rate (DDR) RAM with an effective speed of 460MHz. In layman's terms, this means it's very, very fast. However, before splashing out this amount of cash, just bear in mind that NVIDIA will shortly be unveiling its lovely new NV20 chipset, leaving you once again in the chasing-performance pack.

BEST BUDGET

VIDEOLOGIC VIVID! 32MB
STREET PRICE £100, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE (01923) 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

The jury's still out on this until the new BIOS and drivers are released, but it seems that Vivid! and cards utilising NVIDIA's GeForce2 MX solution are neck and neck in both price and performance. We like Vivid! – its smart technology should ensure that as games become more complex, it copes better than other cards in the same low-end market.

SOUND CARD

BEST BUY
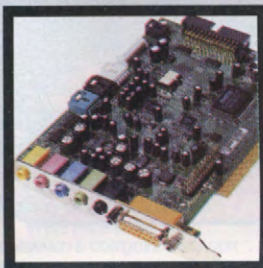
VIDEOLOGIC SONICFURY
STREET PRICE £60-75, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE (01923) 277488   WEBSITE www.videologic.com

VideoLogic's SonicFury was the first sound card to utilise the super-efficient Crystal CS4630 chipset, and is still the best value for money. What's so special about it? The chipset, known as SoundFusion, is a multi-purpose Digital Signal Processor (DSP) that can be reprogrammed in software depending on the function it's being used to accelerate. As a result, it can give hardware support for up to 96 streams of DirectSound 3D audio, more than enough for today's crop of games. If you hunt around, you can also find an OEM version of the card on sale with no software bundle, a bargain for under £60.

BEST BUDGET

SOUNDBLASTER PCI512
STREET PRICE £45, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE (01189) 344322 WEBSITE
www.soundblaster.com

As Creative's SoundBlaster Live! reaches the end of its shelf-life, the company has released a cut-down version featuring the same chipset – the SoundBlaster PCI512. Providing all the bells and whistles required by gamers, this cheaper card represents superb value for money while still supporting DirectSound 3D acceleration and Environmental Audio (EAX).

SPEAKERS

BEST BUY

VIDEOLOGIC SIROCCO CROSSFIRE
STREET PRICE £210, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE (01923) 277488   WEBSITE www.videologic.com

Quite how many times this speaker set is going to appear in the *ZONE* hall of fame, I'm not sure, but it shows no sign of being eclipsed in terms of quality for 4.1 gaming. By 4.1 we mean, front left and right and rear left and right satellite speakers, coupled with a big meaty subwoofer. The fact that this speaker set is rated at 100W RMS doesn't sound that impressive – but when you consider that you can crank the dial around 80 per cent of the way before they start to distort, you'll understand our fondness for these. And with 1000W Peak Mean Power Output on tap, the loud bits are, um, really flipping loud.

BEST BUDGET

ALTEC LANSING ATP3
STREET PRICE £75
MANUFACTURER Altec Lansing
TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE
www.alteclansing.com

The only other multimedia speaker company we've ever had time for is Altec Lansing, whose decently priced products never fail to impress, even if they lack the hi-fi credentials of VideoLogic products. The ATP3 is a sub and two sat combination that delivers a typically meaty, crisp Altec sound. If your budget stretches, you can try the ATP5 for 4.1 gaming.

JOYSTICK

BEST BUY

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCEFEEDBACK 2
STREET PRICE £65, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100   WEBSITE
www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/sidewinder/sidewinder.htm

Force-feedback products aren't everyone's cup of tea, but if you are interested, nothing comes close to the SideWinder FF2. It's a huge, heavy tabletop affair, with the power transformer built into the base. An infra-red sensor causes the stick to leap to attention when you grasp it. The force feedback routines work extremely well – mainly because the motors are so powerful. If more games made better use of the technology, it would be a must-have piece of gear.

BEST BUDGET

SAITEK CYBORG 3D GOLD
STREET PRICE £45
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE (01454) 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.co.uk

Despite the grungy website and horrible joysticks of yesteryear, Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and infinitely adjustable – even lefties are catered for – and its response and accuracy are unequalled, even among more pricey competition.

MOUSE

BEST BUY

RAZER BOOMSLANG 2000
STREET PRICE £70 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Labtec
TELEPHONE (01256) 386000   WEBSITE www.razerzone.com, www.labtec.com

These fabulous 'über-mice' have been the instrument of death for the *Quake* elite for a couple of years now. During this time the only way you could get your hands on one was to import it from America and pay a premium, as you couldn't actually buy them in this country. But now all this has changed thanks to Labtec picking up the hardware. OK, so it is rather expensive and it also takes quite a bit of getting used to, but if you're looking for a real lift to your gaming then the Razer Boomslang 2000 is the only way to go.

BEST BUDGET

MICROSOFT USB INTELLIMOUSE
STREET PRICE £15 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/
hardware/mouse/intellimouse.htm

The basic USB Intellimouse is one of the finest control devices ever produced – accurate, comfortable to use and above all, cheap. In fact, all the fancy mouses Microsoft has produced since this are deeply inferior for gaming in our opinion, mainly due to shape and button positioning.

STRAIGHT TALKING

⭐ **TROUBLE SHOOTER** Martin Korda

The metamorphosis continues. For starters, some of the more technical pages in this section are hopefully beginning to look a little more appealing. It's also nice to see so many of you still sending in entries for the Stupid Compo. Keep them coming.

After replacing the Walkthroughs with the Sites For Sore Eyes page, we thought we'd bring you even more for your money by directing you to the best websites for ten games rather than the best five for two. Retro Zone is going to be a regular feature from now on, so all you nostalgics out there can get your monthly fix, although if I hear anyone saying: "They don't make them like they used to" I will have to seriously reconsider the whole thing.

Come to think of it, I've never understood the logic behind this argument. What would you rather play, *Wolfenstein* or *Half-Life*? *Dune* or *Shogun*? Quite frankly, it's a bloody relief they don't make games like they used to, otherwise I rather suspect most of us would have given up on them quite some time ago.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

YOUR HOSTS

Adam Phillips | Keith Pullin | James Lyon

CHEAT MASTER

Welcome to another steroid injected cheat extravaganza

⭐ **CHEATING GIT** Keith Pullin

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/Cheat Master, *PC ZONE,* Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **Dear Keith** or **Cheat Master** in the subject line.

MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE
Microsoft

If you're faced with a big metal wall when it comes to thinking your way out of trouble in the latest big-bot blaster, simply hold keys 'Ctrl, Alt and Shift', then type:

IY Invulnerability
UO Infinite ammo
HF Heat tracking off
IB Destroy enemy Mech
ML Successfully complete mission

HITMAN: CODENAME 47
Eidos Interactive

We printed some codes a couple of months ago and now we've got hold of some more. So, if you need some extra firepower give this a whirl:
• Place a Beretta 92 in your inventory. Select another gun that you want ammo refill for and ensure that is the only object you are holding. Now drop that gun on the floor, hold the Beretta 92 that was in your inventory, and then pick up the gun you just dropped. With a bit of luck you should be holding two guns with 15 rounds in each.

There's also another bug you can exploit:
• After you have completed a mission's objectives, press F1 to view the mission status. When the 'success'

message appears press 'ESC' to return to the game. Now repeat this 'F1' and 'ESC' loop and you should hit a cash bonus roll.

AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE
Electronic Arts

To add to last month's selection we can now bring you this 'give item' cheat. Simply turn on the 'Console Mode' in the options menu of the game and then press the ~ (tilde) key while playing. Now type 'give [x]' where [x] is one of the weapons in the list below:

w_knife.tik   w_cards.tik
w_mallet.tik   w_jackbomb.tik
w_eyestaff.tik   w_icewand.tik
w_jacks.tik   w_blunderbuss.tik
w_demondice.tik w_ragebox.tik

⬇ And wipe that stupid grin off your face!
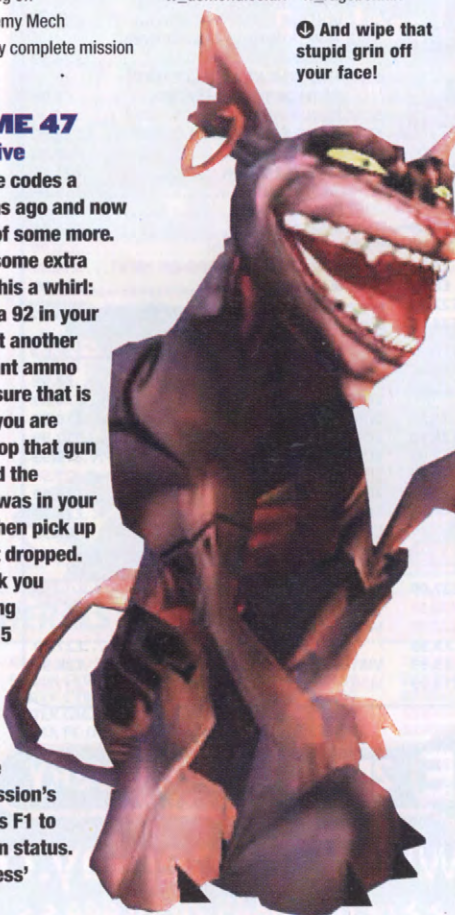
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE
Phantagram

While you're playing, hit Enter and type '~makemyday' to activate the cheat mode. Now, hit Enter again and type in any of these magical mutterings...

~godblessu	Full health
~amosbemerciful	Full mana
~knowledgeispower	Fast mana regeneration
~hastalavista	All buildings destroyed
~baegopa	Add 500,000 to all resources
~simsimhae	Speedy constructions
~dayspring	Full map view

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

There are plenty of cheats around for this, so we'll try to squeeze more in next month. For now, here are a few more to go with last month's offering.
• To access all levels, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press up, v, right, up, c, v, right, up, left, c, c, up, b, b, up, right.
• To access all the hidden characters, pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press c, b, right, v, b, right, b, v, right, c, right, up, up, left, up, c. If you entered the code correctly, the pause screen will shake.
• Finally for 'Blood Mode', pause the game, hold Numpad 7 and press right, up, c, v. More next month.

MERCEDES-BENZ TRUCK RACING
THQ

Here's one for all you redneck truckers out there. Key in any of the following cheats during the game:

BUGGYGIRL	Activate cheats
MOGLI	Win the race
ALLOFF	Deactivate cheats

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So, you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheatmaster, do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it. For the next few months (and even longer if you're lucky), we're going to be running a Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most ridiculous and pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the *PC ZONE* prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, with the title

Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk. Make sure to include all your correct details, so if you do win, we know where to send your special prize (see left). Congratulations to this month's winner, Scott Miskin from Aylesbury Bucks, whose rubbish cheat makes a dog fly across the screen instead of a parrot in *Age Of Empires 2: The Conquerers*. Just press 'Enter' and type 'WOOF WOOF', then 'Enter' again. Scott's equally shit prize is this stunning mouse, which we hope he puts to very good use.

BLAIR WITCH 3: THE ELLY KEDWARD TALE
Take 2 Interactive

If you want to get through this game quicker, hit the F10 key and type in these spoilers:

iamgod	God mode
giveall	All weapons
bighead	Big head mode
gibnplenty	Lots of gore
t2000	Terminator skin
givemefaith	Full health

nod3d	Invisibility
instantcrash	Crash the game
thunderstorm	Create storm (Possible indoors)
snowstorm	Snowflakes fall

MTV SKATEBOARDING
THQ

To unlock all levels, skaters and skateboards, just enter your name as 'PASWRD' in lifestyle mode.

SCREAMER 4X4
Virgin Interactive

For some speedy success hold the Shift key on the main menu and then type any of the following codes:

ALLCARS	Access all cars
ALLTROPHIES	Access all trophies
ALLTIRES	Access all tyres
ALLRDIFFERS	Access all rear differentials
ALLFDIFFERS	Access all front differentials
ALLENGINES	Access all engines
RABACAR	Raba truck
BIGFOOT	Toyota Hilux Bigfoot

TIMELINE
Eidos Interactive

Having a bit of a time crisis? Never fear. During the game press the ~ (tilde) key and type: 'GOD'. Your health will now never go lower than ten points.

SEA DOGS
Bethesda Softworks

If you need a hand dealing with the hardships of life on the open seas, press Ctrl and Z during a sea voyage, then type in any of these codes, you scurvy-ridden seadogs…

have life	Ship repaired and crew restored
expu mne	Extra experience
deneg day	Extra cash
get me magic	Inflict more cannon damage
make screen shots	Immune to cannon fire
now i flying	Press Ctrl and F to move camera view
fire from camera	Press 0 on Numpad to fire from current camera position
teleport	Press Ctrl and L to teleport ship to current camera position. PCZ

DEAR KEITH

Keith Pullin dishes out the cure for those digital blues

SAFE CRACKER

Q I am currently playing *Lighthouse*. I have reached the wreck of the Ironclad in the diving pod and have located the safe that I assume contains the missing piece. Unfortunately, no matter how much I try I can only get the pod's robot arm to move the plank a small distance and it still prevents me from getting the safe open. Can you help a frustrated gamer?
Derek, email

A Certainly can Derek. There are actually two planks blocking the safe, trouble is the lower one is extremely hard to see. Use the robot arm to move this lower one, and now turn the sub once to the left. Put the hook at the end of the arm into the hole in front of the sub and the second piece of wood should fall away. You can now open the safe.

MINER PROBLEM

Q I'm on the conjurer levels of *Nox* and have run into a slight problem. I am in the Mana Mines and so far have found four of the miners (the one at the top of the lift, and three below), but now I'm stumped. I think I need a key for the gate to the next

lift but I can't find it. I've been stuck on it for almost a week now, so please help.
Michael Cowin, Workington

A You may be missing some miners. At the start of the mines head northeast until you reach a wolf. The doors out of that room each lead to a miner. Take all the miners to safety and the other miner should let you down to the next area. If that fails then simply try killing all of the remaining monsters. Good luck.

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

Q I am playing the amazing *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* and have got to the Philadelphia level where I'm stuck. I really need to know how I can empty the fountain in the middle. I also heard that there's a vertical ramp in this level somewhere but I can't find it, can you help me so I can get onto the last level?
Steven Burr, email

A There's a balcony on one of the buildings with some valves on it that you have to hit to empty the fountain. It can be reached by doing a wall ride and wallie over the balcony rail, but there are also two ways to reach it by grinding up wires (one of

them has the secret tape on it). The secret area opens up when you grind a certain wire near a building with green rails on it. Otherwise, here's a code to skip the level. Pause the game and hold Numpad 7 and press b, left, up, right, b, left, up, right, spacebar, b, left, up, right, b, left, up and right.

BUSY BODIES

Q I am being driven up the wall by *Driver*. I have made it to (what I assume is) the last level, The President's Run. But no matter what I do, I just cannot get to the destination before the cops smash me up. Do you have any tips, strategies or cheats for this level? Please!
Jake Avery, email

A You assume correctly – this is indeed the last level of the game. There are some who call this the most "unbelievably difficult and ridiculously unfair level of any game ever". This really is a heartbreaking final run and there are only general tips to give. Firstly, towards the end of the level, start cornering early to counteract the ice and snow. Secondly, the final checkpoint is outside the garage, so

Put on the dunce's cap you fool…

don't drive in, just crash into it. When you do make it to the end some cheat modes are activated. Save the game now and you won't lose the cheats.

NO DUNCE'S CAP?

Q Help me. This is driving me flippin' nuts. I'm playing *Escape From Monkey Island*. How do you get full marks at the diving competition? I've tried diving like that Marco dude but the wise old guy keeps telling me my head is too flat. How can I get my head to be pointy?
Angel, email

A In order for your head to be pointy you simply need to put on the dunce cap before you dive. After that perform exactly the same moves as Marco and you should win the trophy.

DEAR WANDY

**Our resident surgeon reads your letters and cures your ills.
Think you know better? Write in, sound intelligent, win £50**

● DR EMMETT L BROWN Phil Wand

GOT A QUERY, DEARY?

Send us a query or a top tip and you could pocket £50.

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in type of thing. And, as an extra incentive, we're offering a cool £50 to the reader who sends in the most interesting query or toppest tip every single month. No, really. Send as much relevant information as you can.

WRITE TO Dear Wandy, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland St, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Address your letters to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **Dear Wandy**

Please note: while we can assure you that we read every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone. Thanks.

DEFRAG FEVER

Q When running Disk Defragmenter in Windows 98, I'm experiencing the following problem: I execute Defrag as usual and it starts OK, gets to about 10 per cent complete, then announces that the "drive contents have changed" and restarts. Fine, I thought, but as this happens constantly, it never gets above 10 per cent. I hasten to add that no screensaver was running. Can you please help, as this problem has also moved on to Scandisk? It checks program files and the registry, and then restarts over and over again. My system is getting slower and slower, and there is nothing I can do. Help.
Anon

A Defrag will restart if it detects any disk activity. You say that your screensaver wasn't running, but it may have been attempting to start up – the subsequent drive access will cause the Defrag process to flip out. So make sure you disable it, along with any power management features you may have enabled. Next, whenever you run Defrag, ensure you don't have any applications running in the background that could be writing to a log file, or perhaps autosaving open documents. If in doubt, reboot your system. Shut down every program in the system tray by right-clicking on the icons and choosing exit, and start over again. This seems to be a common problem, but unfortunately one with no simple answer.

BYE BYE HIGHWAY

Q Having recently installed the Home Highway Service from BT (which is using an ISDN external modem), I feel disappointed because it is not as fast as I imagined and is quite expensive. I'm considering installing ADSL, which is also from BT. In PCZ #98 you said it only costs £40 and it's fast. But in a caption beneath a photo of an ADSL modem you said that it would be the last time I saw one. Does that mean BT is going to stop the service? What would you do in this situation? I mean, I want to change over to ADSL, but it's a little bit fuzzy whether we have to change our phone lines and cable. Which also costs money. Please advise me if you can.
Jun Koo

A My apologies for the confusion. The "last time you'll ever see one" caption was actually a dig at the problems BT has been having with its ADSL installations. ADSL is here to stay, although you may have to wait a month or two for BT to find an engineer who knows how to install it. There should be no reason to change your phone line and cables – that's half the point of ADSL, it uses existing copper based wires – although you will lose Home Highway. The two systems will not co-exist. After a successful line survey – that my house failed because it is 500 yards "too far" from the exchange – the engineers will install a splitter box where you currently have your BT master socket (or Home Highway entrance point). This has two connectors, a normal phone socket and a data socket. The data socket is connected to the ADSL modem (although it's not really a modem, it's a router) which you then plug in to your machine. At the moment, BT's only offering to the home user is an Alcatel USB modem. So if you're using NT4 or an early version of 95, or don't have a USB socket on your machine, you're up a certain creek minus a paddle. Sorry.

MODEM SNAGS

Q I'm hoping you can help me out as something has happened to my modem. I have an external 56K Rockwell Mr. Modem. The BT socket that the modem plugs into is located out in our hall – so when I want to go online, I have to run a long cable out of the room. On a number of occasions the wire has been snagged and my modem has taken a tumble from its perch. I used to connect at an average connection of 52K, but now when the modem dials up, it chatters much longer with the ISP. After going through its cycle two or three times the connection is made, but at a lowly 24K. Have I broken it?

One more question if you don't mind. My PC has one of those ATX cases. Is there a way to turn off the PC power without pulling the plug?
Paul Boland

A As the modem is still connecting it's safe to assume it's OK, although I don't recommend bounce-testing it any more. The problem is more than likely the cable itself. When a modem connects to your ISP, they have a 'chat' to find out how fast they can go across the wire between them. If your cable has become snagged, trapped or stretched, renew it. Make sure it has two to three metres spare to save your modem doing further nose-dives.

As for how you turn off an ATX machine? Press your finger on the power button, and hold it down. Depending on the BIOS configuration, the machine will shut down somewhere between 4-8 seconds later.

INTEL OUTSIDE

Q I'm stuck in a dilemma. Currently I have a Gigabyte twin processor motherboard with a Pentium II 466 Celeron chip and 256Mb RAM, a 32Mb Riva TNT2 graphics card, plus a 10Gb hard drive. Every January I upgrade, and have always gone with Intel as they are the best. This time however, I am stuck on whether to stick with the Pentium brand and buy a new motherboard and a PIII 700, or whether to go with AMD as you can get a faster chip for less money. I'm still a bit worried that AMD are not 100 per cent compatible with all the games, as my brother has an AMD K6-2 450 and he has a few problems with certain games. Should I keep my motherboard, as it will run up to a 700MHz chip, or should I get a new board that runs faster and better?
David

A You should have no problems with an AMD

£50 WINNER!

NETWORK UPDATE

Quality tech support like this deserves a reward

Q Couldn't help butting in after reading Dear Wandy in PCZ #98. Richard Bamborough, don't ditch your motherboard yet. The A-trend ATC-6220 supports 8x multiplier maximum. Even though there's no indication of this in the manual, with 100MHz RAM you could upgrade the board to a nice 800MHz because maximum core frequency = multiplier x front-side-bus speed. To get around the fact that the board only supports Katmai Slot Pentiums, get yourself a FC-PGA to Slot converter from Jungle.com for a measly £12 and you're away. John Anthony, if you are only ever going to connect two PCs, each with a 10/100 Ethernet card, forget the hubs, use a CAT5 crossover LAN cable instead. This way throughput is always at 100Mbs and you don't have to break the bank because a 5m cable costs £7.50 from Maplin. If more than two PCs will be connected, get a hub. And to you guys, great magazine, keep up the good work.
Prisque Duval

A Some useful information. With regards to the crossover LAN cable, this is indeed a handy trick, although in my experience most High Street stores go cross-eyed when you ask for one. It's also something I shy away from recommending, as the hub-based approach to networking is the way forward for gamers, allowing them to add and remove machines to and from their network with zero aggravation. But for those of you connecting just two machines, Prisque is absolutely right – a £7.50 crossover cable will do the trick.

system. One of the systems I run is a 1GHz Athlon, and it misbehaves just the same as the Intel based systems. Most large PC manufacturers now have several AMD machines in their range – they're hardly likely to do that if they had any doubts about the stability of the technology. Most of the problems that people associate with AMD chips were actually caused by badly written drivers, either for the motherboard chipsets or video cards. But that's now a thing of the past.

ATI OR NVIDIA

Q My parents are thinking of buying a new PC for me from Gateway, but Gateway only ship ATI Radeon 32Mb SDR boards and NVIDIA GeForce GTS 32Mb boards (the GeForce is £30 more expensive, but this is not too important). I would like to know which one of the two boards is better. I have read that the Radeon with 32Mb of DDR memory is quite good, but is there a difference between DDR and the SDR? Is the SDR one better than the GeForce? I would like to get this right as I can't afford a costly upgrade after a couple of weeks.

Ashley Hobbs

A DDR and SDR describe the type of memory used on the board. DDR stands for Double Data Rate, SDR is Single (ie plain vanilla). The speed of the memory governs the amount of information that can be moved from the chips to the screen – video bandwidth. As the

8-ready card on the market, and performance-wise is somewhere between the Voodoo5 and the market leading GeForce GTS.

GEFORCE FARCE

Q I recently bought a GeForce2 GTS. Very excited, I got home and plugged it in straight away. OK, I thought, let's test this baby out on *Quake III*, and so went and installed it. After installation I tested it on the first demo. At the end it achieved 27fps, which is only 3fps more than my old Voodoo3. I was expecting around 70fps on my AMD K6-2 500.

After asking a friend, he told me to get the latest drivers, so off I went. Once installed, I ran the *Quake III* demo again, this time managing to scrape 33fps, which was still under half what I expected. After a few more words with my friend, he said, "I think you're trying to stick a Ferrari engine into a yo-yo." My motherboard is a Gigabyte, and he said it is to do with my bus speed (I have no idea what that is). So do I need a better motherboard to gain full advantage of my new GTS? If so, I might as well go for a new chip and case. Which is better, a Thunderbird or a P4?

Ian

A The GeForce2 GTS is a simply fantastic card, so your friend is partly right. I don't know exactly what motherboard you have, if it doesn't support AGP 4x (basically the AGP standard but running four times as fast as originally designed), it's going to be talking to the GeForce at a far slower rate than

> **"You're not going to get the frame rates you see in magazines when the very heart and soul of your machine costs less than sixty quid"**

resolution and frame rate go up, the amount of data that needs to be shoved about starts climbing. A card based on DDR technology will be able to go higher than an SDR based card before it starts breaking into a sweat. The ATI card is so far the only DirectX

the card can actually handle. The other problem is even more fundamental: although a fine budget chip, the K6-2 500 is still a budget chip. You're not going to get the frame rates you see in magazines when the very heart and soul of your machine costs less than £60. A new motherboard and processor would let the GeForce stretch its legs. As for which one, well, the Intel P4 still bears an extortionate price tag. The Thunderbird is competitively priced and works well, especially when used in conjunction with one of the VIA KT133 chipset motherboards such as the Asus A7V or Abit KT7. **PCZ**

☉ The ATI Radeon won't beat a GeForce in frame-rate speed trials.

WATCHDOG

The software industry can be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. *PC ZONE* ram raids their premises for you and snatch some answers...

● **WRITER** Adam Philips

MORE JUNGLE BUNGLES...

Q I ordered an MPEG2 card from Jungle.com on March 28, 2000, and it arrived knackered. After a huge phone-a-thon around Jungle's tech support staff and VideoLogic's tech support, we collectively concluded that the card was buggered beyond repair. I asked Jungle for a simple replacement but it was unable to do this as it apparently had to take it back to base in order to test it and refund me. If I wanted another one, I'd have to re-order. I didn't.

Two weeks later (April 12), I decided to give them another chance and ordered a pair of DVDs – *American Pie* and *The Mummy*. Now these are not obscure titles so you can probably understand my shock when the package arrived and it only contained the *American Pie* DVD. After emailing Jungle and asking them where *The Mummy* DVD was, I was told it was on back order and would be dispatched to me as soon as the new stock was received.

Accepting this, I decided I needed a bit of light relief so I ordered *Need For Speed: Porsche Challenge* on May 3. It arrived within a few days, battered and bruised. The CD case was shattered and the box was nothing more than pulp – but the CD was OK. I slipped it into my PC and installed the game. When I came to load it up for the first time though, I was greeted by the usual black line creeping along the screen but with "laddar" written across it. When the game finally "laddared", I was asked to "skapa spelare". Being of English heritage, I didn't have a bloody clue as to what this meant.

I tried to navigate my way round the game but to no avail, and I eventually gave up. After unfurling the battered box, I realised Jungle had sent me the Nordic version of the game. After discovering there was no way I could convert it to the English version, I contacted them and had to go through the same rigmarole of return and refund only – no replacement. I didn't bother.

By this time (May 29), I still hadn't received my copy of *The Mummy* (even though shop shelves were groaning under the weight of unpurchased copies) so I cancelled this order. These three incidents have persuaded my usually kind heart to never again turn to Jungle, due to its abysmal disregard for common sense.

Mark Ketley

A Oh dear. Suitably impressed by this collection of cock-ups, we thought we'd offer Jungle a right to reply: "The first order that Mr Ketley placed with us was indeed faulty," offers Emma Styles, Jungle's customer care supervisor. "Unfortunately at the time his order was placed with us, we did not have a procedure to replace the goods. Therefore we advised that we would be more than happy to accept the return of the item for a full refund and

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BT GAMING HELL

Broadband is supposed to offer us the next generation in online gaming. But is BT and its Openworld service really up to it? Two readers think not...

Complaint #1

Q ADSL is crap for gaming because BT has huge spiking within its network. Therefore we who use ADSL have ping rates of 12-34, yet disconnect from the server for a few seconds every 3-10 minutes depending on time and business. BT says there are no problems at all and it cannot recreate this fault on its support desk, but why say this when everyone's ADSL line is different? Different quality wires, exchange differences and distances as well!

Lee

Complaint #2

Q I've been on BT Openworld's ADSL for a couple of months now and to start with, everything was fine. It mostly still is except when it comes to the most important thing – the lag. It's absolutely terrible. When I first had Openworld installed, it was almost like playing on a LAN. There was no lag and I was hitting anything that moved in *Unreal Tournament*.

Now, just a few weeks on, the lag is terrible – sometimes as bad as my 56K modem. I'm still pinging great – somewhere in the range of 30-50. I intermittently get the little red 'flag' in the corner of the screen though. Sometimes it's so bad that I can't respawn for up to

ten seconds because the mouse inputs don't get through to the server.

I've spoken to BT's support people and their response was: "There is nothing we can do, it's down to the contention ratios at your exchange." They have a contention ratio of 50:1. On the website, BT were going on about "lightning fast gameplay", "lag-free gameplay", etc. This was my primary reason for signing up with BT. I am an avid *UT* player and I have had to drop out of my clan because of the problems experienced.

I really wouldn't mind paying the £40 per month if the thing worked like it's supposed to. While downloads are not such a problem, surfing the Net can sometimes be very slow and quite often when I try to connect, I cannot even get an IP address assigned. I am not the only person to have these problems. I have been reading the newsgroups and things seem to be quite bad for a lot of people.

Axel

You need a bad ADSL connection like you need a hole in the head.

A Sounds like the Utopian dream of ultra-fast, trouble-free broadband gaming isn't quite shaping up in the eyes of some of our readers. How does BT react to the above complaints? "Gamers have particular requirements when it comes to broadband Internet," offers Jasmine Holland, BT Openworld's marketing and PR bod. "We are in the process of updating our FAQs to adequately address their issues. In this respect, it is really useful for your users to flag any issues to our technical helpdesk so that they can investigate them."

Fair enough, but judging from the above letters, the helpdesk has been informed of the situation and they have seemingly been of little use in the above cases. In the meantime, BT Openworld says: "If you or your readers can give us further information on the problems gamers experience, this will help our technical team to identify the solutions."

So readers, to make sure we're all singing from the same hymn sheet so to speak, send your information directly to us at Watchdog and we will happily pass them en masse to BT Openworld's tech desk on your behalf...

this would then enable Mr Ketley to re-order the item."

Jungle says your order was placed last March and at the time, "we were a young company, still putting procedures into place. Therefore we felt this was the most appropriate course of action we could take. We now have a procedure in which the customer can choose whether they wish to receive a refund or a replacement. On occasions it may not be possible to provide the item and in these instances, a full refund will be provided."

Turning to your DVD debacle, Jungle says that when you ordered your DVDs, they were getting certain DVDs from an external supplier. These were apparently being shipped from the supplier's warehouse in

London: "Therefore we were at the mercy of our suppliers as to the despatch of these items," explains Jungle. "We now hold stocks of our Beat and Vision products in-house so we have direct control over our stock and keep most popular titles in the warehouse."

Finally, in reference to your brief fling with the joys of driving Porsches while under the influence of the Nordic language, Jungle admits the game was indeed the wrong version of the product: "We investigated this matter in the warehouse. It would seem that the items we had ordered from the manufacturer were the incorrect format. We froze any further shipments until the error had been rectified. With regards to the packaging of

this order, this was an isolated incident."

Jungle concludes by extending its apologies to you for any inconvenience caused: "I would like to assure Mr Ketley it was not our intention to cause him any distress. I would like to assure him that changes have occurred to improve our service and we will continue to make these changes."

DAMN DELAYS!

I'm a subscriber to the NTLWorld service. Last year, I decided to go 'off-line' until such a time that the web would be cheaper. I had already been connected through the old cable service provider in my area, Diamond Cable, who had recently been taken over by NTL. With them, I had an extra line installed solely for my web access, so this extra line was turned off.

When NTL announced its free Internet access package early last year, I immediately signed up for a disk, which arrived about a month later. When I asked for my line to be re-connected, the fun and games began. Firstly, NTL said it would take six weeks. After six weeks, I was told two weeks. After three weeks and me going up to

the area office, I was told "within a week". The cause? Waiting for a new part from the US. Then I received a letter giving me my new line's number and saying NTL was sorry for the delay. I was offered one month's free line rental when my line was connected (£9.50 – wow).

I waited a month and then went to see my local NTL customer service manager who informed me: "This side of Christmas – no way." I then decided to have its TV service as a substitute.

When my TV was installed, the kind NTL worker told me the truth about my wait: "As you live in one of the first areas in Leicester that had cable, I bet the 'junction box' at the end of the street is full. We get it all the time. You want a second line? You'll have to wait until someone on this street cancels their NTL contract. And I bet you're not first in line either."

Stuart Childs

We called NTL, who offers the following: "We have contacted Mr Childs directly to apologise for the delay in the installation of his second line and can confirm that his line will be installed on January 17. In addition, as a gesture of goodwill, we have credited his account with a month's subscription."

NTL says the delay in installation was not "due to a lack of cabinet space as suggested by an engineer, but due to the need for a part from the US. The distribution of this part from the US was seriously

> **"You want a second line? You'll have to wait till someone on this street cancels their NTL contract. And I bet you're not first in line"**
>
> STUART CHILDS GETS CONFLICTING STORIES FROM NTL

delayed, hampering our efforts to provide the second line."

NTL says it can only apologise for "the miscommunication of this situation" and "is looking at ways to make sure it doesn't happen again."

If anyone else has had problems, do let us know… PCZ

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, whether it be a ropey piece of software or a shoddy PC, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs especially, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means that we can resolve your problems much more quickly.

SITES FOR SORE EYES

The web is full of helpful sites that cater for your gaming difficulties. We help you find the FAQs…

❌ BROWSIN' James Lyon

If this collection of web walkthroughs had a name it'd be Al. Altruism. There are hundreds of people out there willing to give away the secrets to every game under the sun. And well done to them, otherwise we couldn't have written this guide. Right, let's get on with it.

BALDUR'S GATE 2
Issue #96 **Score** 85%
✪ www.bgdungeon.com/bg2/
✪ www.neoseeker.com/resourcelink.html?rlid=17242&rid=16448

⬆ Head down to the Dungeon.

Such a large game deserves a lot of attention to cover it all. Try the *Baldur's Gate* Dungeon or www.planetbaldursgate.com for details on characters and items. There are also several well written FAQs out there that'll guide you through, usually detailing only one kind of party but still useful. Otherwise fans should be happy to give you valuable advice on just about everything in the official forum at: www.interplay.com/bgate2/index.html

ULTIMA IX: ASCENSION
Issue #89 **Score** 52%
✪ www.ultimadungeon.com

⬆ I don't know what looks more stupid. That cave or his outfit.

It may have been bugged to high heaven, blessed with a lacklustre plot and been a disappointing end to one of the best RPG series around, but it looks like some people still took it to heart. The

Ultima Dungeon is a nicely focused site that doesn't stray from its subject matter, that is, helping people get through *Ultima*. Any additional questions can be answered on the site's very helpful forum.

RUNE
Issue #97 **Score** 79%
✪ members.brabant.chello.nl/~h.vangompel/r/runewalk.txt
✪ www.runenews.com/walk.shtml

⬆ A full moon always brings the loonies out.

There's a patently obvious weak joke to insert in this paragraph, about spoiling your enjoyment of the plot by reading through this walkthrough prematurely – one that we'd never stoop so low as to print in such a quality publication. It's a simple FAQ but it contains all the essential information you'll need to finish. And the author omits plot points to make sure you don't *Rune* your enjoym… oh, right. (Sigh.)

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME ONE: RUSTIN PARR
Issue #96 **Score** 86%
✪ members.aol.com/LShaw3457/BWPV1WT.html

⬆ Dead-scary music is the key.

As any Jeff K fan will tell you, any site with intrusive background music and garish colours is surely a winner. Cower in terror as the eerily disturbing MIDI instills you with a mortal dread. There's also a link to similar walkthroughs to the other two games in the series (but they featured more of that dead-

scary music, so I didn't want to look at them).

WHEEL OF TIME
Issue #85 **Score** 68%
✪ www.happypuppy.com/win/walkthrough/wheeloftim-win-1.txt
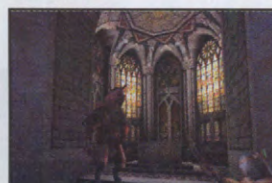
⬆ I love time. You love time. Wheel Of Time.

This is another simple looking guide that works its way through the game carving a path through to the end. Nothing special, but then neither was the game.

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
Issue #98 **Score** 82%
✪ www.canofworms.com/GAME/mi4/index.htm

⬆ Be prepared to open a Can Of Worms.

There are many enthusiastic fans and fansites for this classic series (try the World Of Monkey Island at mi.adventuregamer.com for instance). For a complete guide, try Can Of Worms, a small site that hosts several walkthroughs.

DINO CRISIS
Issue #93 **Score** 56%
✪ www.cheatcc.com/psx/sg/dino_crisis.txt

⬆ "You break it, you pay for it."

Since *Dino Crisis* is such a blatantly lazy PlayStation port

⬆ Be prepared to swim with the fishes.

it's no problem looking at a PlayStation FAQ for information on this game. A comprehensive walkthrough complete with ASCII drawn maps and a quick-check item list. More than you could ever need to get past one of the weakest in the survival horror genre.

DISCWORLD NOIR
Issue #79 **Score** 90%
✪ http://www.co.uk.lspace.org/games/discworld/noir/index.html

⬆ It's almost official.

If you're at all interested in anything to do with Pratchett, it's worth taking a look at the main part of this website. The section, detailing the third of the *Discworld* games, is well put together and could almost pass as the official website, what with its noirish pretensions and all.

HITMAN: CODENAME 47
Issue #98 **Score** 85%
✪ www.gamefaqs.com/computer/doswin/file/hitman_a.txt

⬆ "Hi honey. I'm homicidal."

Did you know that if you scan the back of the main character's head with a bar-code reader it comes up as "Mushy Peas – 79p"? Surprisingly, the website fails to mention this little known fact, but everything else is pretty much here, with lots of extra details on weapons and items and a walkthrough for all the missions. Probably as good as these things get.

NOX
Issue #87 **Score** 72%
✪ http://nox.ww-underground.com/html/guides/walkthroughs/warriorwalkthrough.vlaad.shtmll

⬆ *Nox*: A poor man's *Diablo II*, but it's not too shabby.

⬆ Get cosy with the warrior classes.

A thoroughly well designed website, Garden Of Nox is one of the best places for all the people who bought this game (all two of them). The walkthrough only features a guide to the warrior class at the moment, but it is split into helpful sections with map diagrams provided to give you an indication of where you are. 🎮

PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the new *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox

complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEWENTRY

In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET

If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a classic, we *mean* it.

Z PCZONE CLASSIC
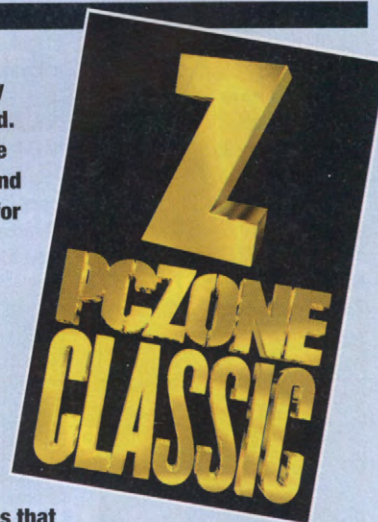
FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #71 · 95%

Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the 'Generations' pack.
PUBLISHER Sierra
• 0118 9209 100

BUDGET

UNREAL TOURNAMENT   PCZ #81 · 90%

Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

QUAKE III ARENA   PCZ #87 · 89%

The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

GUNMAN CHRONICLES   PCZ #97 · 87%

While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must buy for any fan of the genre.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

PROJECT IGI   PCZ #97 · 85%

Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage orientated storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.
PUBLISHER Eidos• 020 8636 3000

MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE   PCZ #99 · 84%

This fourth offering in the popular combat series is a feast of superb graphics, challenging missions and er... realistic snow. The multiplayer option is great and features some excellent team-based modes, but like all big robot games, it's still only likely to sell in America.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

STAR TREK: VOYAGER – ELITE FORCE PCZ #94 · 84%

The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever CPU team mates give renewed credence to solo play in this increasingly multiplayer genre.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE   PCZ #88 · 82%

The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

ALIENS VS PREDATOR   PCZ #77 · 80%

It might not be the best FPS you can buy, but it's definitely the scariest. *Aliens Vs Predator* is also the only game that offers three distinct ways of playing through the game, so if you're looking for a solid single-player blast, this provides excellent value for money.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE   PCZ #89 · 79%

More like an arcade explosion of unmitigated violence than an FPS in the *Half-Life* mould, *SoF* is a great deal of fun. It's also very sick. If you can stomach amputations and decapitations, then we can guarantee you some pure, mindless entertainment.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

STRATEGY

BLACK & WHITE

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #100 · 95%

NEWENTRY One of our joint top games of all time, *Black & White* is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI-enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
• 01753 549442

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR   PCZ #89 · 90%

Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate enemy generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options never get in the way of instant playability. *Shogun* will blow you away.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

AGE OF EMPIRES II   PCZ #84 · 88%

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOE II*, the gameplay has been honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and opt for this classic RTS.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

GROUND CONTROL   PCZ #92 · 87%

RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

CALL TO POWER II   PCZ #98 · 86%

Civilization II is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official *Civ* endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

SUDDEN STRIKE   PCZ #96 · 86%

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.
PUBLISHER CDV • 0208 880 4144

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS   PCZ #97 · 85%

From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is hugely addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM   PCZ #96 · 85%

Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld* has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

BATTLE ISLE IV: THE ANDOSIA WAR PCZ #99 · 84%

A real step forward for strategy gaming, *Battle Isle IV* combines real-time and turn-based elements in a fully-rendered 3D world. The graphics and camera angles are awesome and despite the linear, artificial feel to the gameplay the result is absorbing.
PUBLISHER Blue Byte • (00 49) 208 450880

EARTH 2150   PCZ #90 · 84%

A fantastic 3D engine and great detail team up with sheer playability to make this one of the best RTSs around. *Earth 2150* is a more traditional strategy title than the likes of *Shogun*, but it takes the genre in directions it has never been before.
PUBLISHER Mattel Interactive • 0144 424 6333

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #93 · 94%

Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

SYSTEM SHOCK 2   PCZ #80 · 91%

Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – REDEMPTION   PCZ #92 · 89%

This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT   PCZ #87 · 87%

An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

BALDUR'S GATE II   PCZ #96 · 85%

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

FINAL FANTASY VII   PCZ #66 · 80%

Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it should be out on budget soon.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

FALLOUT 2   PCZ #71 · 79%

Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

DIABLO II   PCZ #93 · 72%

Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever.
PUBLISHER Havas Interactive • 0118 920 9100

ICEWIND DALE   PCZ #93 · 75%

Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but no competition to *BG2*.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

ODIUM   PCZ #87 · 70%

Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences à la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Odium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked for a while.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ACTION/ADVENTURES

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #71 · 88%

If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.
PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255

BUDGET

DISCWORLD NOIR   PCZ #79 · 87%

Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7258 3791

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS   PCZ #98 · 87%

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814 132

THE NOMAD SOUL   PCZ #83 · 86%

Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

HITMAN: CODENAME 47   PCZ #98 · 85%

Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR   PCZ #96 · 84%

As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE   PCZ #84 · 83%

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest *Indy*, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN   PCZ #98 · 82%

It's not often that a game with little promise on paper surprises us so nicely. *DS9* is a third-person action/adventure that offers you the chance to control Sisko, Kira or Worf. Gameplay is different for each character, which provides longevity in spades.
PUBLISHER Infinite Loop/Koch • 01256 707767

METAL GEAR SOLID   PCZ #96 · 82%

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

MESSIAH   PCZ #85 · 81%

Shiny's wonderful shooter features a chubby cherub, but also a bunch of whores and lots of gratuitous swearing. As Bob, under-age agent of God, you must possess people's bodies and, like a good and typically hypocritical Christian, kill everything that gets in your way.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #98 · 86%

⊕ With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how *2.0* would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is it.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2   PCZ #96 · 84%

⊕ Buckle up for some high-speed driving action, as you race around the streets of London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original *MM* was a belter, but with more cars and races, and improved controls, *MM2* is the new daddy.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000   PCZ #97 · 82%

⊕ While lacking the detailed realism of *GP3*, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenalin pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

LE MANS 24 HOURS   PCZ #87 · 81%

⊕ Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

GRAND PRIX 3   PCZ #94 · 80%

⊕ This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated *GP2*, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

INSANE   PCZ #97 · 78%

⊕ Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000   PCZ #90 · 78%

⊕ Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

RALLY MASTERS   PCZ #89 · 77%

⊕ Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

TOCA 2   PCZ #76 · 76%

⊕ Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP   PCZ #84 · 75%

⊕ Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it is let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.
PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #99 · 89%

⊕ Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, and though the graphics and general gameplay may not be groundbreaking, *Battle Of Britain* is one of the best examples of a game that transports you right into the cockpit. Tally ho!
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FALCON 4   PCZ #72 · 89%

⊕ We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing still.
PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS:
THE MIGHTY 8TH   PCZ #96 · 87%

⊕ *B17* reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive/Microprose • 01454 893893

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2   PCZ #97 · 87%

⊕ If WWII dog fighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics all come together to create a true sense of excitement and realism.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR   PCZ #68 · 85%

⊕ This updated version of DID's masterpiece may seem a bit superflous for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title, now available on budget.
PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET   PCZ #83 · 84%

⊕ If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure to watch out for friendly fire.
PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400

MIG ALLEY   PCZ #80 · 84%

⊕ *MiG Alley* gives hardcore flight simmers a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III   PCZ #82 · 83%

⊕ For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the *Flight Sim* series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CRIMSON SKIES   PCZ #96 · 82%

⊕ This game moves away from the detailed simulation mould of so many plane games, and concentrates more on all-out dogfighting. It's instantly gratifying, fast paced, entertaining and adds a much needed twist of humour to an otherwise serious genre.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

FLANKER 2.0   PCZ #85 · 82%

⊕ Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yankie blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding nevertheless, *Flanker 2.0* recreates the real thing in minute detail. However, be warned: hours of practice are needed before you can go off shooting stuff.
PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300

SPORTS

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #98 · 88%

Pro Skater 2 is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break every bone as he smashes his face against the concrete. Oh, and the music's fantastic too.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

180 KICKFLIP + PC ZONE SPOOGE-WORTH 2775 X1.5

VIRTUAL POOL 3   PCZ #99 · 85%

VP3 has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeanette Lee. And with 18 different pool games it's a must for pool fanatics.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423 666

FIFA 2001   PCZ #97 · 83%

Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly make over. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are immaculate.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING   PCZ #85 · 83%

Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 8738 8199

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000   PCZ #92 · 82%

It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

NBA LIVE 2000   PCZ #85 · 82%

As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as Inside Drive, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

OPEN TENNIS 2000   PCZ #92 · 81%

Not since Super Tennis on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball back and forth over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. Incredibly playable and unsurpassed in multiplayer.
PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2   PCZ #68 · 78%

The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates and, when you're tired of the baize, you can move round and have a go on the fully-featured darts board instead. Saves going down to the Working Men's Club.
PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive • 020 7368 2255

ACTUA SOCCER 3   PCZ #72 · 72%

If you can't get on with FIFA then Actua is the second port of call for footy fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which goes a long way to helping maintain its shelf life.
PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601
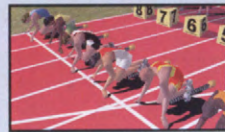
MILLENNIUM GAMES   PCZ #93 · 65%

Everyone remembers the good old days of Daley Thompson's Decathlon. Sergei Bubka might not have quite the same pedigree, but this athletics simulation is loads of fun nonetheless and should keep you entertained for a while.
PUBLISHER Midas • 01782 633500

MANAGEMENT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #96 · 93%

This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

THE SIMS   PCZ #87 · 85%

This game offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CAESAR III   PCZ #70 · 84%

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

SIMCITY 3000   PCZ #74 · 83%

Ten years on, SimCity remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, SimCity 3000 is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.
PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON   PCZ #75 · 82%

Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, RT is hugely addictive.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

SPACE COMBAT

X – BEYOND THE FRONTIER

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #82 · 87%

The spirit of Elite lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.
PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656

TERMINUS   PCZ #93 · 86%

Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? Terminus proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out FreeSpace 2.
PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com

FREESPACE 2   PCZ #84 · 85%

Completely different from X, FreeSpace 2 offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4222

X-WING: ALLIANCE   PCZ #77 · 81%

At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running X-Wing series. Certainly the best-looking X-Wing game to date, Alliance is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

STARLANCER   PCZ #91 · 80%

While Starlancer doesn't do anything startlingly new, it is a highly polished affair with compulsive gameplay and gorgeous visuals. A must for space sim fans.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

BENCHMARK GAME **BUDGET**

PCZ #79 · 90%

You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

SWAT 3   PCZ #85 · 87%

Artificial intelligence doesn't get any better than this. Add some truly spectacular graphics, an ingenious command interface and edge-of-your-seat gameplay, and you've got a top title.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

GIANTS   PCZ #95 · 85%

This mammoth and origianl 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

ROGUE SPEAR   PCZ #84 · 83%

We loved *Rainbow Six* and, although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

BATTLEZONE 2   PCZ #84 · 79%

Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. The fight for world domination has never looked so good.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

ONLINE ONLY

COUNTER-STRIKE V1.0

BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #98 · 93%

The most widely tested game ever finally comes out of its Beta stage. Most people had reservations about the new models, but you soon get used to their camp animations and begin to appreciate how much more detailed they are. You can expect to see the game improving, as the V1.0 tag suggests there will be plenty of updates in the future.
DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK   PCZ #92 · 90%

The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better. Chris Anderson has spent months casting spells with hundreds of other people and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ALLEGIANCE   PCZ #91 · 82%

The first true online-only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, coordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

ASHERON'S CALL   PCZ #88 · 76%

The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in real life, it's a great tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

ULTIMA ONLINE: RENAISSANCE   PCZ #92 · 75%

It's been at the top for a while, but now that the sequel is on the way the original looks dated. *Renaissance* isn't enough of an improvement for it to compete with *EverQuest* – online RPGs are moving on.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS

DOOM

This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.

ULTIMA VII

Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.

DUNE II

If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles is testament to its staying power.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.

UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

MAGIC CARPET

Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

WING COMMANDER

The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?

TOMB RAIDER

She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?

CIVILIZATION

The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.
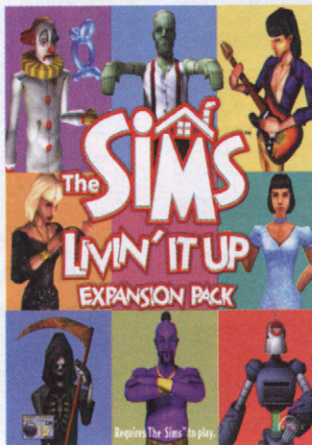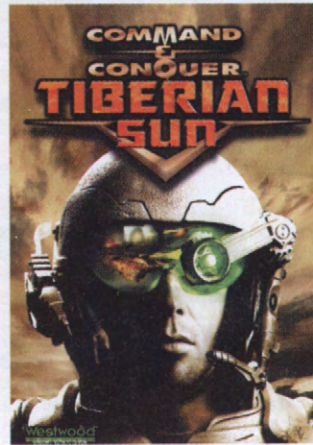
ONTHECD

Two action-packed bumper CDs to help satisfy all your gaming cravings

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out, pronto!

CD-ROM HELP Phone Interchange on **0152 5711 482** any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, **or email pc_zone @interchange.co.uk.** Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points

★ If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
★ If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
★ Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

★ You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
★ Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
★ Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D-accelerator only.

DISCLAIMER

★ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
★ Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) which may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

DEMOS

CDZONE2

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

Interplay

This month we bring you an exclusive demo of Interplay's superb action/strategy game *Giants*. As two Mecc soldiers, you must embark on a mission to find 20 pieces of Vimp (an alien cow) meat. Along the way you'll have to dispose of a number of nasties that are intent on gouging out your eyes and various other parts of your anatomy. The graphics are nothing short of breathtaking, especially if you've got an up-to-date graphics card. If you haven't, we're sure that *Giants* will go a long way towards persuading you to buy one.

Controls

Special	F
Activate Back Item	Left shift
Cycle Weapons	Q and TAB
Give Health	H
Throw Grenade	G
Throw Mine	B
Use Flare	V
Thrust	Right mouse button
Nitro	Space
Disciple Mode	Left Ctrl
Disciple Attack	Left mouse button
Recall Disciple	2
Zoom	E and Z
First-person Mode	R
Map	C
Move	W, S, A and D
Drop Weapon	J

"Grrrrrrrrrr."

This looks like a job for the crocodile hunter.

"What are you looking at, shorty?"

It's no Porsche, but it'll just have to do.

DEMOS

CD ZONE 1

FALLOUT TACTICS: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL
Interplay

EXCLUSIVE

This month's second exclusive is another strategy corker from Interplay. Taking control of a group of six characters, you must help restore the world to its former glory after a nuclear holocaust, by fighting off an evil and powerful enemy. You've got the option of playing either in real-time or turn-based modes, with a choice of four difficulty levels. There are four tutorials (basic, ambush, stealth and sniper), which help you get to grips with the game's intricacies. After this, you can try your hand at one of two missions in single-player or multiplayer modes. The ultimate goal in both is to find and eliminate the enemy's leader, while also fending off hordes of hostile troops. Good luck, you'll need it.
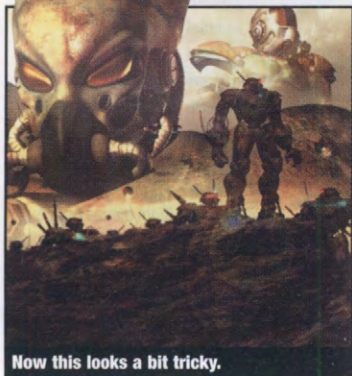
Now this looks a bit tricky.

Controls

Scroll Map	Cursor keys
Toggle Skilldex	S
Toggle Inventory	I
Toggle Pinboy	P
Move	Left mouse button
Force Move	Ctrl and left mouse button
Formation Move	Alt and left mouse button
Run	Shift and left mouse button
Stop	Backspace
Use Skill	Alt and numbers 1-8
Cycle Weapons	Y
Reload	R

Lara. Yesterday's heroine.

TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES
Eidos

Gone but not forgotten, Lara rises from the dead for this latest slice of Croft pie, which recounts four of her earlier adventures. Good fodder for long-term *Tomb Raider* enthusiasts and a good introduction for those still wondering what all the fuss is about. This demo gives a taster of Lara's all-shooting, all-climbing, all-swimming antics – and remember, they're not bigger they're just more defined.

Controls

Forward	Up arrow
Jump back	Back arrow
Turn left	Left arrow
Turn right	Right arrow
Draw weapons	Space
Action	Ctrl
Jump	Alt
Look	0 (the use direction arrows)

ONI
Take 2 Interactive

There are two sides to *Oni*: the fantastic combat system, which is absolutely unrivalled on the PC and makes beating up enemies a pleasure, and the game proper, with its endlessly boring collection of corridors, doors and computer consoles. This demo illustrates both perfectly, from the step-by-step tutorial to the first level, where you'll be able to experience for yourself just what the game is all about.

This demo works a little differently than most, though. If you want to install it properly, go into the 'Demos' folder, right click on the *Oni* file and extract it onto your hard drive.

You won't be able to change controls within the game, but if you're not comfortable with the default keys go into the game folder and open the key_config.txt file (generated after you've run the game once) and change it until your heart's content.
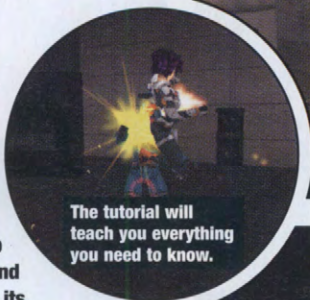
The tutorial will teach you everything you need to know.

Forget guns and use your fists instead.
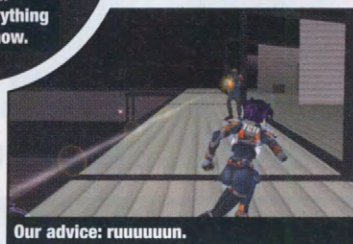
Our advice: ruuuuuun.

Controls

Forward	W
Sidestep left/right	A/D
Back	S
Drop weapon	E
Punch	F/Left Mouse Button
Kick	C/Right Mouse Button
Jump	Space
Crouch	Shift
Hypo	TAB
Reload	R
Action	Ctrl

MECHWARRIOR: VENGEANCE
Microsoft

Get some instant action in this introduction to the fourth offering of the popular big robot combat saga. Once you get the controls configured to your liking you'll be stomping through the incredibly realistic-sounding snow in no time, because there's just no substitute for thundering around in a couple of tonnes of metal killing machine.

Controls Keyboard and mouse

Get set to get stomping.
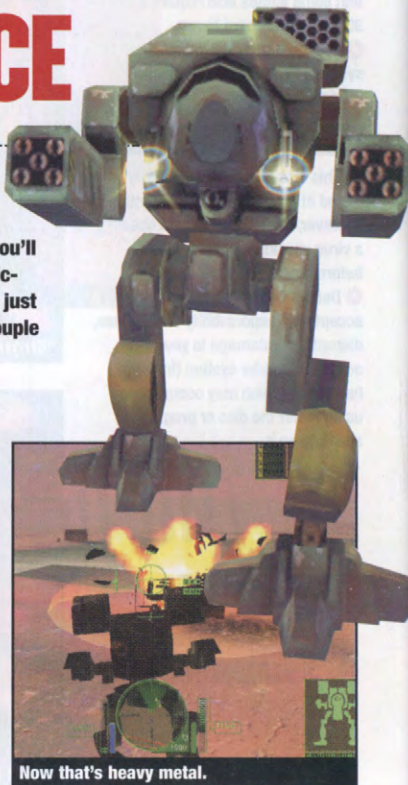
Now that's heavy metal.

FUR FIGHTERS

Acclaim

This one bears a remarkable resemblance to *Oni*, in that it's a third-person action game where you can shoot and beat up enemies, but with slightly more dogs, cats and pink panthers running around. Not to be taken too seriously, *Fur Fighters* is about a squad of Special Force animals who have to stop a band of evil animals taking over the world. It's not exactly *Quake III*, but it's silly enough to make you smile for a few minutes. The demo includes two levels, one single-player and one multiplayer.

Controls	Mouse/keyboard
Forward	Up
Backwards	Down
Step left	Left
Step right	Right
Shoot	Left mouse button
Jump	Right mouse button
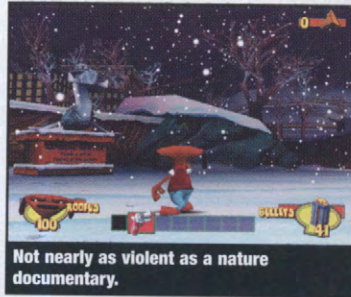
Not nearly as violent as a nature documentary.

BUNGALOW
100
BULLETS
100

You can choose between six different characters.

...but not very beautiful-looking models.

Links has some beautiful-looking courses...

LINKS 2001

Microsoft

Another year, another *Links* games, and it's another cracker. Here's your opportunity to try out one of its luscious looking courses – Chateau Whistler – against one of the world's greatest players, Sergio Garcia. There's also the option to play over the Net, so once you've whipped your computer-controlled opponent, you can play against a mate instead. First of all, you've got to set your player up, giving them an animation and a face, one of which bares an uncanny resemblance to *Fast Show* funnyman John Thomson – nice. Then it's off to the first tee to play a round.

Controls	Mouse

STUNT GP

Team 17

It's not easy trying to be original with a racing game and, while there's nothing in *Stunt GP* that we haven't seen before, it has a few interesting ideas. The basic premise is *Tony Hawk's* meets *Micro Machines* meets *GP3*, which means you race around in a Scalextrix type of environment, while trying to pull off stunts along the way. The demo includes a standard race and a trick mode. The latter is very much *Tony Hawk's 2* with radio-controlled cars. You can make up your own mind whether it works or not.

Take it higher baby.

Vrroooooooom.

A cunning stunt.

And the winner is...

Controls	Keyboard/gamepad/wheel
Accelerate	Up
Brake	Down
Steer left	Left
Steer right	Right
Turbo boost	Ctrl

C'mon, work a little harder guys.

Where's the dragon then?

THREE KINGDOMS: FATE OF THE DRAGON

Eidos

Here's your chance to embark on a tutorial and a few small misssions in this *Age Of Empires*-in-the-orient-style game. Play as Lui Bei, one of the rulers of the three ancient kingdoms of China in his quest to rebuild the shattered nation. There's loads of juggling of troops and resources, which should be second nature to any dedicated strategy fan.

Controls	Keyboard and mouse

Winner of our DIV Games Creator compo.
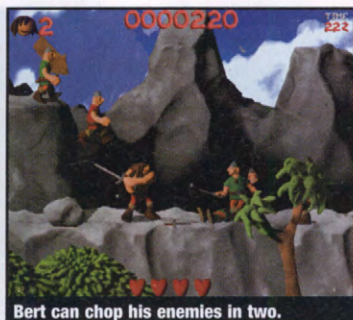
Bert can chop his enemies in two.

BERT THE BARBARIAN

Anthony Flack

Your chance to play the legendary *Bert The Barbarian*, the game that won our DIV Games Creator 2000 competition last issue. Bert has a big sword and a few little moves up his sleeves to help him slice and dice his enemies into squeaky, wobbling plasticine pieces. It's pretty tricky to get off the first level, but it's fun trying. Oh, and see if you can work out the lyrics to the intro music.

Controls Keyboard

SCREAMER 4X4

Virgin

Here's one for all you Land Rover lovers out there. Take control of an off-road vehicle and race round the Knight Down course, a bumpy and challenging course that will test your driving skills to the limit. You have to set your car up before racing, with one of four engine types, as well as setting your suspension levels, tyre pressure and damage levels among other things. There's only one difficulty level on offer here – easy – but you'll find that's no bad thing as this is one challenging racer.

Controls

Clutch	X
Shift Up	Q
Shift Down	A
Handbrake	Space
Recover	Enter
Map	TAB
Change Car View	F2 and F3

Don't jump.

MOD WATCH CD2

Counter-Strike v1.0
The full version of the best mod ever.
Half-Life to 1.1.0.4 Full Patch
The latest patch needed for *CS* online.
Strike Force 1.50 (plus 1.55 patch)
Unreal does *Counter-Strike*.
Quake III Fortress Beta 1g
One of the finest *Quake III* mods ever.
Day Of Defeat (HL)
Team Fortress meets WWII.

Wasteland (HL)
Mad Max meets *Half-Life*.
Canned Tuna (HL)
Weird name useful mod.
Quake III: True Combat
Fantastic *QIII* mod.
Gridiron (Q3)
American football with guns.
Instagib (Q3)
One shot, one kill in this simple but fast *QIII* mod.

PATCHES CD1

Half-Life: Opposing Force v1.1.0.3
Diablo II v1.05
Cleopatra v2.1

Warm Up!
Zeus: Master Of Olympus v1.01
Colin McRae Rally 2 v1.05
Ground Control v1.0.1.0

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX

Acclaim

If you prefer performing stunts on two wheels rather than on a skateboard, then check out this stunt arena BMX bike demo. Backed somewhat predictably by a raucous surfer-rock sound track (which is no bad thing), you have to pedal like mad and perform as many daring stunts and jumps as you can in the given time limit. It's not as much fun as *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*, but there's still plenty of entertainment to be had. Best of all, there's absolutely no chance whatsoever of flaying your skin and smashing your knees up.

Controls Keyboard/gamepad
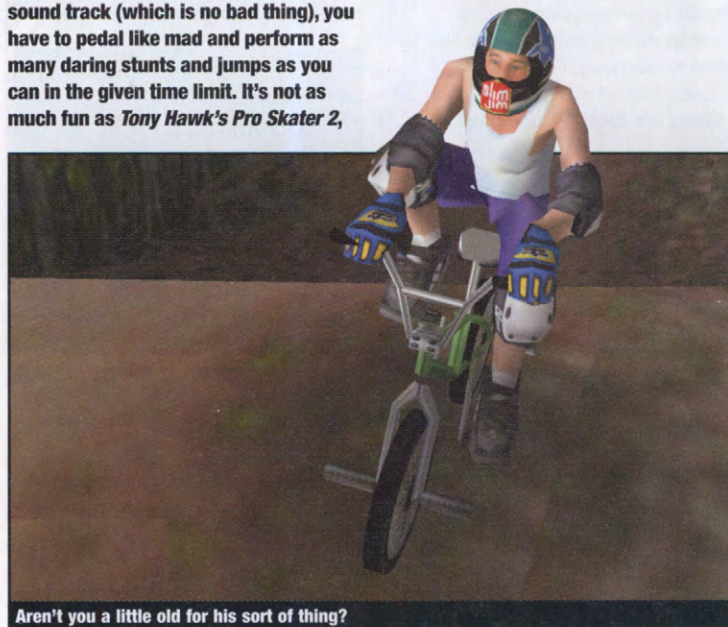
Aren't you a little old for his sort of thing?

Talk about sitting on the fence.
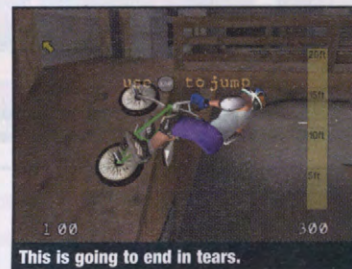
This is going to end in tears.

UTILITIES CD1

Adobe Acrobat Reader 4.05
Datum Online
DirectX Media 6.0
ExDesk 1.8
GetRight 4.3
HyperSnap-DX Pro v4.01.09

ICQ2000b Build 3278
mIRC 5.82
Ping Tool 2.6a
PowerToys
Roger Wilco Mk1.1a
TreeSize Professional 2.31
Winsock 2
WinZip 8.0

DRIVERS CD1

nVidia Drivers – Detonator 3 Win 95/98/ME
nVidia Drivers – Detonator 3 Win 2K
nVidia Drivers – Detonator 3 Win NT4
nVidia Drivers – RIVA128/128ZX #3.37 for Win9x AGP cards
nVidia Drivers - RIVA128/128ZX #3.37 for Win9x PCI cards

nVidia Drivers – RIVA128/128ZX #3.41b for WinNT4
Voodoo 4/5 AGP/PCO 95/98/ME v1.04.00
Voodoo 3 2000/3000 AGP/PCI 95/98/ME v1.07.00
Voodoo Banshee AGP/PCI 95/98 v1.04.00

EXTENDED PLAY CD2

Turn to page 144 for the lowdown on new *Homeworld Cataclysm* maps and new missions for *Sudden Strike* and *Starfleet Command V2*

RETROZONE

Time to go all misty-eyed and warm with nostalgia

⊗ **LOOKING BACK** Richie Shoemaker & Rhianna Pratchett

MIDWINTER

Chilled to perfection

Today's strategy games may give you the opportunity to command great armies and take over the world while sending thousands of computer sprites to their deaths, but rarely do they give you the opportunity to ski while doing it and more's the pity. *Midwinter* gave you the chance not only to ski, but to hang-glide and even to snowbuggy across the Midwinter Islands, which have been plunged with the rest of the world into a perpetual Ice Age by a rogue meteor crash.

Created by Mike Singleton, who made such classics as *Lords Of Midnight* and *Dark Sceptre,* the game was a successful combination of first-person 3D animation with strategic gameplay, as you traversed the island as Captain John Stark, recruiting the rest of the islanders to join you in your battle against the obligatory bad guy. You spent a large amount of your time trying not to fall off your skis, and periodically you got to shoot a few people with a sniper rifle – always the test of a good game. *Midwinter* spawned two sequels – *Flame of Freedom* and *Ashes Of The Empire*, and after a disastrous remake of *Lords Of Midnight* Mike Singleton mysteriously vanished from the gaming scene. He will be missed.

Snowbuggying was definitely the way to travel.

Lest we forget.
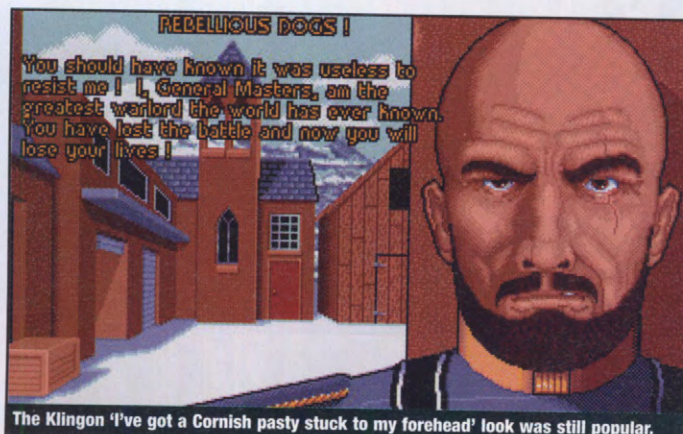
The Klingon 'I've got a Cornish pasty stuck to my forehead' look was still popular.

Outdoors really did look like this back then.

THE BEST OF THE REST

STUNT CAR RACER
(Atari ST/Amiga/PC)

Probably one of the most original racing games ever devised and one of the first games to include a multiplayer option. The racetrack was more like a rollercoaster ride, built 100ft in the air with jump, chasms and drawbridges to negotiate. Although, crashing off the edge obviously had serious implications for your health.

THE LOST PATROL
(Atari ST/Amiga/PC)

You're desperate, alone and 57 miles from home in this blend of strategy and arcade action. You find yourself in charge of a group of seven troops, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, who have crash-landed in the middle of the Vietnamese jungle. As if that wasn't enough, they need to get home so someone can make a film about them.
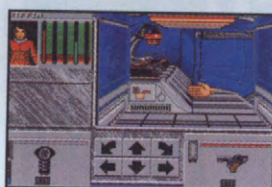
XENOMORPH
(Atari ST/Amiga/PC)

Really just *Dungeon Master* in space, created by someone who watched *Aliens* too many times. Working via a 3D first-person view with square-to-square movement, you had to explore a massive space colony trying to find out where the hell everyone was, gathering weapons and smooshing anything that even looked at you funny. Classic stuff.

POPULOUS
(Atari ST/Amiga/PC)

This is the one that really kicked off god games. The great granddad of the *Populous* series saw you assume the role of a deity, mobilise your followers and kick the arse of any would-be gods along the way. Inflicting earthquakes, floods and a nasty case of molten lava on the unbelievers made it a must for megalomaniacs everywhere.

BEAST BUSTERS
(Arcade)

When it came to graphics, coin-ops were still way ahead of home computers and with light guns now commonplace on arcade cabinets, more and more shooters on rails were appearing. Wrapping up *Operation Wolf*-style gameplay in a zombie-infested world, *Beast Busters* was notable more for the fact that three could play together rather than two.

« PAST FORWARD »

GAMING NEWS FOR FEBRUARY '90
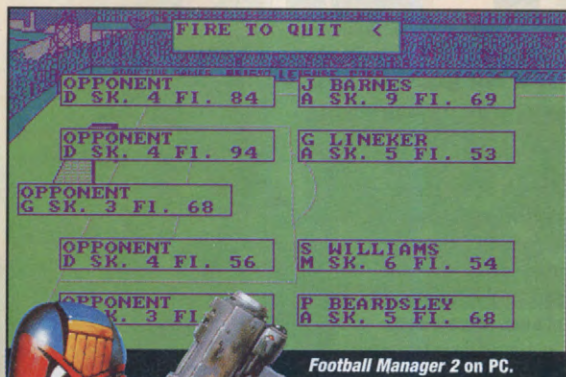
Football Manager 2 on PC.

Nightbreed, obviously.

☻ Thumb back to our Bulletin section and you'll find news of Acclaim's just-announced *Paris-Dakar Rally* game. Spooky thing is, nine years ago Coktel Vision surprisingly released *The Paris To Dakar Rally* for the 16-bit machine. It probably wasn't very good otherwise we would have remembered it. Still, woooaaho.

☻ Oh. My. God. Spooky news too is that back in Feb '90 the highly anticipated horror adventure *Nightbreed* was being shown off to the magazines of the day. *Nightbreed* from Clive Barker, as in *Undying* from Clive Barker, reviewed this issue on page 66.

☻ Remember Kevin Toms of Addictive Software? He who smiled from the pages of *Crash* and *Sinclair User*, offering us his seminal *Football Manager* game (the *Champ Man* of its day). Well soon to hit Atari and Amiga was *Football*

Manager: World Cup Edition. The fear at the time was whether the game would be coded in BASIC.

☻ If you think we're too obsessed with real-world combat today, back in 1990 things were just as bad. *The Lost Patrol* was, of course, just out, and to follow we soon had Codemasters' *SAS Combat Simulator*, which didn't have much combat and wasn't much of a simulation, but for a fiver, was a least good value.

☻ Commodore announced UK sales of 200,000 Amiga machines, while Atari hit back saying more than 250,000 STs were in the hands of UK users. The sniping was soon to end however: Sega's Megadrive was on course for a summer release in Europe.

☻ And to end, another strange coincidence: Probe announced a side-scrolling platform adventure called *Judge Dredd*, available later in the year. It wasn't too good. Luckily for us today, Rebellion's *Judge Dredd* game will be a whole lot better. Unfortunately, we'll have to wait until next summer rather than the coming one.
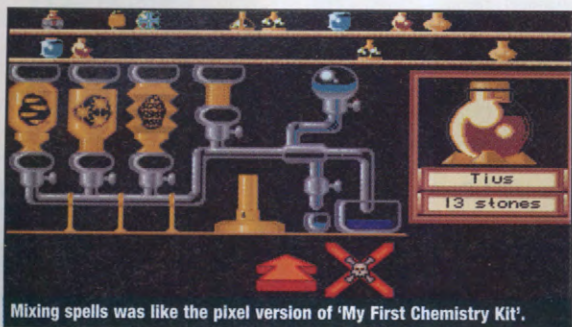
Mixing spells was like the pixel version of 'My First Chemistry Kit'.

Good, bad and damn ugly.

And it isn't even Easter yet.

DRAGON'S BREATH

Having bad breath was never so much fun

The reason Tamagotchis only lasted five minutes was that it was all very well hatching and nurturing your pets, but you couldn't lead them on to devastate your enemy stronghold and aid you in world domination. Their creators should have really looked to *Dragon's Breath* (also known as *Dragon Lord*) for

inspiration. This three-player turn-based strategy game for the ST and Amiga had you breeding your own army of dragons to aid you in vanquishing your enemies.

You initially started with one dragon and a clutch of 20 eggs that you had to incubate and hatch into the next generation of fiery killing machines. Then you could take your little dragon

babies out for a quick pillage around the local countryside, raising taxes from various villages and devastating a few enemy strongholds along the way. There were also pieces of a magic talisman to collect and guard with your dragons if you didn't already have enough to do.

Even though some of the elements of *Dragon's Breath*

were a little hard to master, like mixing and casting various spells to increase your dragon's power and the influence of your kingdom, the beautiful graphics and general scope of the game made it an instant classic.

EXTENDED PLAY

This month, armchair tacticians get to smack spaceships around. Now are we good to you?

⊕ **SPACE CADET** Tony Lamb

❝There's nothing blindingly new in *Cataclysm*, but it's more rounded and approachable than its predecessor. We like that sort of thing❞

HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM

The hit follow-up to Sierra's space-based real-time strategy game *Homeworld* just proves how good the original was as it rides the crest of popularity in our top ten RTS games list. If you're in the market for an RTS-with-a-twist and don't fancy the usual ground-based shenanigans of *Ground Control, AOE2* and – even *Shogun: Total War* then *Homeworld Cataclysm* is the one for you. It's in space, it's in 3D and it's in a shop near you. You won't be disappointed.

Issue 96 saw our own Mr Paul Presley slaving over a hot PC to come up with something nice to say about *Homeworld: Cataclysm*, and he gave the game a thoroughly fluffy 85 per cent – a score that puts it into our Award For Excellence bracket. We know he's a self-confessed fan of the original game but even allowing for the fact that he would inevitably go all misty eyed at the prospect of playing *Cataclysm*,

the game wasn't going to get a good score from him just for turning up – it had to earn its Brownie points. He might be a fan, but there aren't any easy rides to be had around here (in a manner of speaking).

Sure enough, *Cataclysm* passed the Presley test with flying colours. Despite the fact that it should have been a mission disc rather than a full-blown game (and correspondingly cheaper for that reason), *Homeworld: Cataclysm* is a worthy second step in the *Homeworld* saga. There are a host of improvements: multiple clans have replaced the two-team nature of the original; tactical co-operation is an element to be capitalised on; ships are more varied and your Mothership is customisable, too. The command structure is more effective and the improved map-viewing system makes both navigation and strategic placement of your forces much easier. There's nothing blindingly new in

Cataclysm, but the game is more rounded and approachable than its predecessor. We like that sort of thing. Installation of these maps is easy. Just unzip them into your *Cataclysm*/multiplayer directory and make your choice on the options screen.

Cataclysm has some damn fine visuals.

⊕ **STAPLES**
Filename: staples4.zip
Size: 5Kb
Rating: ●●●

⬆ Staples was originally designed for the original *Homeworld*.

When Author Medamanx originally designed this map he had the original *Homeworld* in mind, but after playing it a few times decided he liked it so much he wanted to update it for *Cataclysm*. Luckily for us, this is the result – intense action and plenty of it. Staples is a medium-sized map with lots of resources dotted about, slipgates to help you get around and plenty to keep you busy without taking too long overall.

⊕ **HYPERSPACE ARENA**
Filename: hyperspacearena.zip
Size: 62Kb
Rating: ●●●●

⬆ Hyperspace Arena is an ideal map for the more advanced *Homeworld* player.

Another update of a *Homeworld* favourite courtesy of Relic, this one is definitely meant for the more advanced armchair strategist. There are resources aplenty but they're well spread out over a very large map, so you'll need to move around a lot to keep resource stocks up – you'll have to become a master of Hyperspace navigation. This map is another one that will take some time to complete so make yourself comfortable before beginning. There are three versions included, for 2-4, 4-6 and 6-8 players.

⊕ **RINGA ROSIE**
Filename: ringarosie.zip
Size: 8Kb
Rating: ●●●

⬆ It's a race for the resources in Ringa Rosie.

This map from author Garraty is an unusual one. There are lots of resources in the map and they're all laid out in rings – the whole map is full of them. Move along the rings in turn, harvesting resources as you go, but remember that your enemies will be doing exactly the same thing, and getting stronger all the time. Watch out where you're going.
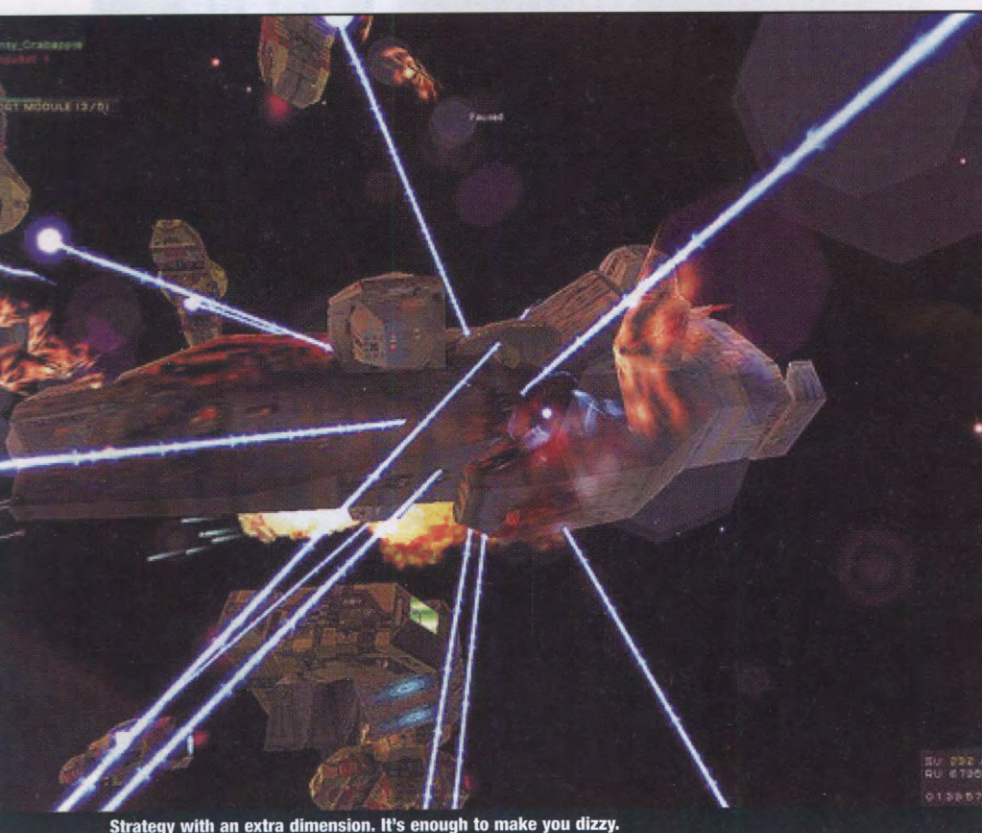
Strategy with an extra dimension. It's enough to make you dizzy.

SCATTERED
Filename: scattered.zip
Size: 57Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⬆ If you like huge maps, then check out Scattered.

If you're a fan of the first *Homeworld* then you might just recognise this map as Relic's original of the same name. Scattered has now been updated for the *Cataclysm* environment and is a great addition to anyone's library. It's a very big map with resources well spread out, so you'll need to keep moving around. Its size means that this is no ten-minute wonder – you'll need to set some time aside to finish. Relic has been kind enough to include three versions for 2-4, 4-6 and 6-8 players.

ASHES TO ASHES
Filename: ashes.zip
Size: 5Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⬆ One of several damn fine maps from author Medamanx.

Another Medamanx outing and a good map for a quick blastabout if ever there was one. You'll have to hit your enemies hard and fast if you want to survive – he who hesitates loses. There are slipgates around to get you across the map, but be aware that going through one is an invitation

to being attacked. The author says that your life is in your opponent's hands... he's probably right.

GILGAMESH
Filename: gilgamesh.zip
Size: 6Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⬆ Loads of intense action in Gilgamesh.

With Gilgamesh, author Medamanx has created another intense map with lots of action. You have a choice of gathering resources to fight for your survival or taking the fight to the enemy. Their command ship is reached by careful negotiation of a difficult series of slipgates, but make sure you have the resources to press the attack home or you'll be sorely punished. The enemy's attacks will drain you quickly, so you'll have to decide whether to build your reserves up first and then attack or just dive straight in.

WHOO HOO
Filename: whoo.zip
Size: 4Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪

⬆ Whoo-Hoo requires a Gung-ho attitude.

The last Medamanx map here, and again lots of action. This map is suited to no-holds-barred, free-for-all action as well as team play. You'll need to fight well and hard to survive.

You get to blow up huge ships, which is no bad thing.

FOUR RING SLING
Filename: fourringsling.zip
Size: 8Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪

The second map for *Cataclysm* from author Garraty, and again there's plenty to keep you busy. You'll find that there are lots of resources around the map but you'll have to make a tactical choice between building up your resource stocks to improve your defences or making a pre-emptive strike against the enemies that are too close for comfort. Remember, while you're building your defences, the enemy is strengthening its attack, and hitting them first might be the only way for you to survive.

THE LONG MARCH
Filename: longmarch.zip
Size: 11Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⬆ This is war boys. So now let's show 'em how it's done...

Another Garraty effort, this map sees a planetary system in reverse – an unnerving experience. The planet that was once the centre of a bustling system has been decimated – by

what event or by whom you don't know – and you'll need to explore the surrounding area carefully to find resources and avoid running into trouble. Move cautiously, because whatever befell this once proud star system could happen to you next.

TREE OF LIFE
Filename: treeoflife.zip
Size: 9Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⬆ Tree Of Life: a map for the veteran.

Homeworld Cataclysm. The fantastic sequel to the superb Homeworld.

Well, well... just when you thought that it couldn't get any better, along comes another *Homeworld* map from the Relic stable updated for *Cataclysm*. Old hands will recognise it and have an idea what to do, but newbies can just rest assured in its heritage – *Homeworld* didn't get to be popular by having bad maps. This is another map for the more advanced player and will test everyone's skill to the limit. You'll have to think on the run to survive this one. **PCZ**

Breath new life into *Homeworld Cataclysm* with these great maps.

NET ADDRESSES

If these maps have merely served in whetting your appetite for all things *Homeworld: Cataclysm*-related, then check these sites out for more of the same.

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www.pczone.co.uk
The one-stop tip-top shop for all things PC game-related. There are so many great things on our website we might just write a book about it.
----
www.sierrastudios.com/games/homeworld/cataclysm/
The Sierra homepage for *Cataclysm*. News, maps, demos and more!
----
www.relicnews.com/
News, strategy, maps and all the latest from Relic themselves.
----
www.strategyplanet.com/hwmaps/
A great source for maps for both *Homeworld* and *Homeworld: Cataclysm*.

COMMENT

They're supposed to be one of the perks of the job, but are these supposed glamorous press trips really all they're cracked up to be? If arch ligger *Steve Hill* doesn't know, nobody does

⭐ **PRANCING ABOUT** Steve Hill

Watch out, lazy journalist coming through.

For many, the much-feted press trip provides the only tangible reason for working in the games industry. A soulless existence of plodding through tedious games and dealing with PR execs is only made bearable by the prospect of six free holidays a year. Some dispute the term 'holiday', but they tend to be the sort that take themselves far too seriously. If going to Los Angeles to pick up a press release isn't a holiday, I don't know what is.

However, the key difference is that with actual holidays you generally choose who you go with, and indeed where, not an option on a press sortie. A random selection of misfits thrown together at the behest of a games company can lead to various forms of mis-adventure. If ITV can get simpletons to watch *Holidays From Hell*, then there must be scope for a Channel 5 show called *When Press Trips Go Wrong*.

Of course there isn't, although a more accurate televisual comparison would be *Big Brother*. A group of strangers thrown into a foreign location with all expenses paid is surely a gooddeal more interesting than ten twats sat on a sofa. Something of an elite social experiment, cliques soon emerge and it can often become a case of survival of the fittest, with weaker members cracking under

"A random selection of misfits thrown together at the behest of a games company can lead to various forms of misadventure"

the combined effects of strong liquor and schoolyard bullying. In some ways, they are glorified school trips, with PR people acting as teachers, albeit of the type that let you call them by their first name and don't mind you smoking (and buy you drinks and pretend to like you).

It can get pretty ruthless, and never more so than on Microsoft's snowboarding jolly of a couple of years ago. A lank-haired fop on his first trip was thrown into the mix

with the usual suspects, and was rapidly singled out as the weakest link. Badgered into a tequila contest, he somehow conspired to lose every round, not to mention the contents of his stomach. The next day saw his drinking prowess matched only by his snowboarding skills, taking the unorthodox approach of crawling down the mountain backwards while an

incredibly patient PR man held his board and smiled through gritted teeth. The balance was redressed somewhat when yours truly made a graceless debut descent, only to vomit copiously at the foot of the slopes before unsuccessfully attempting to bury the evidence like a dog, much to the amusement of my peers and the horror of unsuspecting onlookers.

It can be even funnier when the PR person loses it.

Having spunked a sizeable wedge of their budget taking a bunch of clowns halfway round the world, the pressure is on to get results. Clearly this isn't helped when the developer you're visiting seems totally unprepared for the arrival of six sweaty Englishmen, as once happened at a high-profile Dallas studio. Numerous games of table tennis and pool later, we were politely asked to go away, drink ourselves blind, and return the next day. The stress was too much for the PR man involved, who suffered a mental breakdown, whereby he could scarcely communicate in anything other than Alan Partridge catchphrases. Impressively, this included pointing out to a bewildered receptionist that Tannoy is actually a brand name, and that she should in fact announce our arrival on the public address system.

As for more obscure locales, Sierra once made the admirably perverse decision

to ship 20 journalists to a fiercely inbred island off the coast of France to promote an adventure game called *Lighthouse*. The link? The island was home to Europe's largest lighthouse, not to mention a cast of characters straight out of *The Wicker Man*, including a bearded hunchback witnessed dancing to Soft Cell at the local discotheque. Terrifying stuff.

In time, veterans of the circuit can get complacent, and, in fact, Paul "won't get out bed for anything less than America or operating heavy machinery" Mallinson was on a trip to the US once when he once leapt naked from his bed and beat me to a pulp. Great days. So essentially, I've wasted the best years of my life showing off. At least it gets me out of the house. 🎮

Steve Hill, last of the famous international playboys.
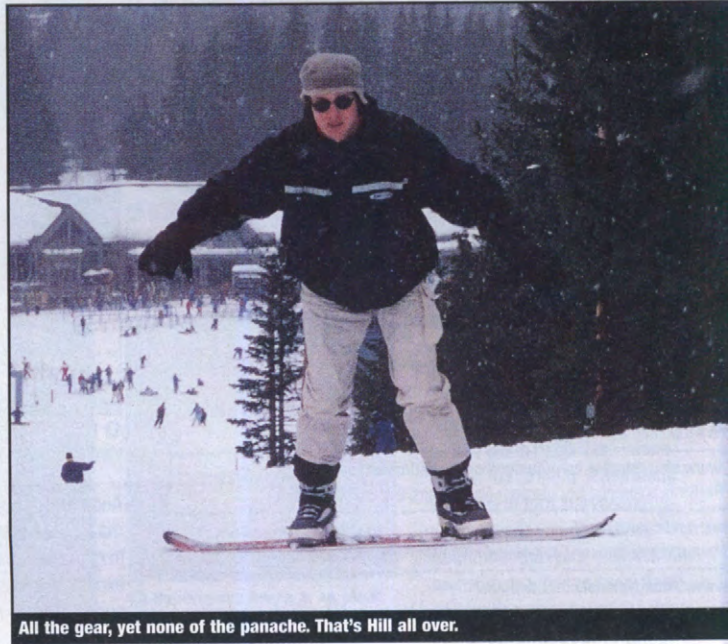
All the gear, yet none of the panache. That's Hill all over.